

THE
MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE,
AND THE
TRIUMPHS OF GRACE.

BY
THE AUTHORESS OF "THE PROSPECT; OR, SCENES
OF REAL LIFE."

"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy
footsteps are not known."

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P R E F A C E.

God's thoughts are wonderful—His plans are mighty,—His ways take in a boundless compass. He perceives at one glance the end from the beginning, and nothing can happen without his wise direction or gracious permission. He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.

The grandeur and immensity of the works of God are equalled only by their astonishing *minuteness*. He that formed the hosts of heaven created also the atoms of the earth—He that wings an angel's flight sustains a feeble sparrow—He that counts the number of the stars, and names them every one, knows and numbers the hairs upon our heads—He that

govern the univers., rules and directs the minutest circumstances in the chequered lot of his beloved children. He frowns in the tempest, and rides on the storm—glows in the sun-beam, and smiles in the calm. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. It is high,—we cannot attain unto it.

But there is still, if possible, a more interesting feature to be discerned in the history of Divine dispensations; and that is, the wonderful union which ever exists between God's providence and His grace, illustriously displayed in the history and experience of His children on earth. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep his holy covenant. All things work together for good to them that love God,—to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Amid the darkest dispensations that emanate from the Throne, there is ever a sweet mingling of heavenly mercy. In the thick and gloomy clouds which sometimes overshadow the pure loveliness of the sky, there is still to be seen—softly stealing, or tinging with its sweet prospective light, or brightly irradiating with its vast and varied beams—the bold expansive outline of Heaven's majestic arch, the

rainbow of the covenant,—the seal of God's love,—the symbol of his mercy, and the pledge of his faithfulness, mingling its softened glories, and forming, in matchless beauty and celestial harmony, the canopy of his throne and the radiance of his crown.

Although there are some mighty movements of the Divine hand, which, from their striking or majestic import, at once arrest attention, and awe a trembling world into silent astonishment, there are many more minute, and yet as wonderful and mysterious arrangements of Heaven, displayed in the experience of solitary individuals. And however important great events in the world's history may be, there are, or there ought to be, some seasons at least, in which the mightiest occurrences on earth will be swallowed up in the deeper, and, to us, more momentous concerns of our own personal condition.

The truths presented to the reader in *"The Mysteries of Providence, and the Triumphs of Grace,"* are of the latter description. This volume contains the history of two Young Ladies, who were brought, by a series of singular circumstances, to the saving knowledge of Divine truth, together with a delineation of

their different characters, and the different alternations of their subsequent Christian course. The leading features of the portrait were actually exhibited in the interesting character and chequered history of the subjects of the memoir. The Authoress, however, has not confined herself entirely to a simple narration, but has occasionally introduced traits of Christian character and experience which may have come under her observation in other individuals, and under different circumstances.



THE

MYSTERIES OF PROVIDENCE,

AND THE

TRIUMPHS OF GRACE.

CHAPTER I.

“Trifles so engage our every thought,
The ‘one thing needful’ is forgot.”

It was on one of those quiet, lovely evenings in May, which so frequently follow the evanescent glories of the capricious month preceding—when the sun had just sunk beneath the horizon, and rays of golden light still streamed grotesquely along the western sky—that two young females sat at the open lattice of a cottage, in the immediate vicinity of London, apparently with the twofold purpose of contemplating the departing splendours of the day, and enjoying the fresh balminess of the air, as

it stole tempered from the banks of the adjacent Thames.

These two young persons, however, were plainly not so inferior in rank, as their humble, though sweet and rural dwelling, would perhaps at first sight have indicated : for, besides their dress being somewhat elegant, their bearing was full of the ease and suavity inseparable from good birth and breeding, whilst their language betokened a cultivation much more in accordance with the graceful, trifling talk of what is termed “ refined society,” than the ordinary every-day utterance of the lowly peasant.

They were engaged in earnest conversation, and from that part of it which now occurs, may be readily supposed the preceding tenor of the discourse.

“ Come, Harriet,” said the elder looking at the two, in a lively tone of voice—“ do not blench—I have done my part.—It is now yours.—So, therefore, disclose, without reserve, all your hidden *peccadilloes*.”

“ Oh ! never fear,” returned her companion, gaily ; “ ‘ self search is a wise search,’ as the good old apothegm declares :—*c’est juste*, and I do not at all shrink from it.—I am a little p^{er}tulent, to be sure, and somewhat impatient to

fool ; but then, look on the other side of the reckoning, and witness the items of my superlatively good qualities. *Imprimis*, Good nature—you smile,—now, one who possesses too much of this quality, is a fool.—I have found it so. Frankness,—often, however, mistaken for communicative loquacity. Generosity,—so far at least as my means extend, yet often rewarded with the keenest ingratitude, which of course has somewhat checked the spontaneous bountifulness of my soul. Sensibility,—exquisite ! as people of sentiment say.—But I will talk no more about my moral properties : these four of them give ample evidence of all the rest,—*n'est ce pas, mon amie ?*"

"Not at all, Harriet, not at all : But the fact is, you dare not penetrate deeper ; and even your superlatively good qualities, as you term them, are ——— : after all," she added archly, "some people may as well be let alone—*blanks* sometimes cannot bear filling up."

"Oh !" rejoined the other, smiling, "I give you a *carte-blanche* ; fill it up as you please. I shall not shrink from the detail."

"No, no, Harriet ; you know the adage. —

A man convinced against his will,
Is ——— of his own opinion still.

Yet—not to ~~lose~~ any opportunity of doing good,—if you will listen seriously to me for a moment, I shall endeavour faithfully to exhibit to your view, some of the realities of your curious composition.”

“Prithee, proceed, dear Eleanor;—I am impatient to be informed on the subject.”

“But, wait an instant, Harriet. In order to judge of character by a sure and unfailing criterion, ought we not, in the first place, to take some acknowledged model of superlative—I thank you for that word—excellence, and thence endeavour to bring the moral qualities under our consideration—yours, *par exemple*—up to this perfect standard?”

“An admirable plan!—a highly important preliminary indeed! I only wonder you did not think of it in your own case—eh! Eleanor?”

“I assure you, the fancy has just this moment struck me.”

“Well; well,—be it so; go on.”

“But, whence shall we take our model?”

“Nay, that remains with yourself.”

“This, then, at least you must do—choose

between ancient and modern times. Now, which will you have?"

"Oh! ancient, to be sure :—I love all old things dearly : witness the old pearl pendants for which I had such a deep regard!"

"Pshaw! Harriet; be serious."

"I never was more serious in my life, love."

"Why," quickly rejoined Eleanor, with a smile, "I do partly believe you there ———. But a truce to trifling. To be in character, I suppose, we must choose a female model?"

"No, I think not;—we need not restrict ourselves so. Besides, the ladies of those times were all much too heroic for me."

"Well, then," said her sister, after a meditative pause, "failing female prototypes, shall we take Socrates, that great and wise man?"

"No :—I had much rather you would choose his pupil and friend—the young, the generous Alcibiades."

"But he had many, many faults, and is therefore not a model of perfect excellence. Let us choose another,—Oh! now I think,—Aristides,—let us take him."

"What! the Just!—Nay, my dear Eleanor, you are not at all happy in the selection of

your models. Were I destined for the magisterial bench, Aristides might perfectly apply ; but ——.”

“Lycurgus, then,” interrupted Eleanor.

“Oh ! shocking !—worse and worse !” cried Harriet, clasping her hands together, and looking at her sister with a pretended air of reproving wonder ; “what !—to teach children to steal !”

“Alfred, the great, the gifted ! Fastidious Harriet, what crime can you lay to *his* charge ? what blemish can you find in *his* beautifully consistent character ? Brave,—handsome,—good,—accomplished,—high-minded, and affectionate ; of happy and benevolent disposition,—of unbending hostility to the vices of his age,—a devoted cherisher of every moral virtue—pious, without affectation—religious, without enthusiasm !”

“Astonishing ! what a rich collection of virtues ! Have you quite done ? Why, Eleanor, you wax eloquent :—your words, I assure you, are pregnant with wisdom, and fall with no ordinary weight upon my rapt and listening ear. Nevertheless, it constrains me to see in how far *verity*—forgive the doubt—is the characteristic of your statement. Now, in my

opinion, Alfred was deficient in a very indispensable good moral property—faithfulness. He was careless of the trust reposed in him. Yes, sister Eleanor, the burning of the good woman's cakes, who so hospitably sheltered him, when he had not a shelter on earth besides, is a fault not to be forgotten,—not to be forgiven."

"Harriet, Harriet, your ingenuity is never entirely at fault. It is very plain, you wish to elude the inquiry; and when that is the case, you will find objections whether they exist or not. Oh! fie, Harriet, you are neither candid nor honest."

But here Harriet failed not to advocate the perfect sincerity of her acquiescence in the purposed search after a model, and reiterated gaily, her assurance of passing through the ordeal faultless.

"Then suppose," resumed her sister, rising from her seat at the window, "since you still profess yourself willing to be examined so thoroughly, that we now shut out the evening air, and as memory fails in supplying us with a fit model from the records of past ages, let us turn our attention to another, and perhaps a surer method of accomplishing our object.

Here are a number of respectable-looking volumes belonging to our good landlady, and it is more than probable we may find something in them to suit our present purpose. Let us turn them over: at all events, whether we succeed or not, it will help to while away the time that hangs so heavy on our hands."

"Agreed," said Harriet, closing the lattice, and following her sister, with a light and eager step, to the little brightly polished book-case, placed perpendicularly against the wall, and which thus displayed to the best advantage, the slender literary stock of the worthy owner of the cottage.

"And what is this venerable-looking *tome*?" she next rejoined, taking up a large volume, and forthwith bringing it to the clearer light of the window. "The Bible! why, this is the very book we want:—a model will surely be found here, in this all-perfect code of morality, to satisfy even my scrupulosity. We need search no more. This, Eleanor, with your permission, as lady arbitress, will do excellently well."

"I am satisfied, if you are so," was the good-humoured reply. And Harriet touched the bell, eager to begin her novel task.

“ Lights, my good Mrs. Linmore,” she said, turning round playfully to the respectable-looking elderly person, who soon, in answer to her summons, appeared at the door ; “ Lights, if you please :—we are going to read your gigantic Bible.”

“ The Bible!” repeated the party addressed, in a tone of undissembled surprise, not unmingled with delight ! whilst, at the same moment, she advanced a step or two, with a kind of involuntary eagerness, as if to satisfy herself as to the reality of the unusual fact ; adding, with considerable earnestness of manner, when she perceived the valued volume truly in the hands of Harriet, “ God’s blessing, then, attend you this night, my dear young ladies.”

But, again observing the *nonchalance* with which her warm benediction was received, she was at once arrested in the utterance of her fervent wishes ;—her countenance assumed its first settled gravity of expression, and an audible sigh escaped from her bosom, as she left the apartment.

“ Poor old Linmore!” said the volatile Harriet, “ I can fancy she thinks me a very wicked creature ! She wonders, in the primitive simplicity of her heart, at the disregard—as she

thinks—of every thing sacred, which appears in my language and manners, because, in truth, they do not strictly agree with her own puritanic habits. Last Sunday, she caught me humming a song, to beguile the tedium of the day, and looked so shocked—so grieved, that I was ready to cry for having done any thing to distress her. And again, only yesterday, I was quoting something from this very Book, to illustrate some one or other of my manifold vagaries, when, as evil chance would have it, she overheard me, and with a dignified firmness, but with much modesty,—for with all her looks of reproofing wisdom, she has so proper an idea of the respect due to her superiors as not often to obtrude her peculiar notions on their notice,—broke forth as follows : ‘ Hush, my dear young lady.—Oh ! what do you say ? Surely you are not aware of the awful meaning of the words you utter ! and, if you are—do you think, or can you hope, when you thus make light of the word of truth, that that God whose word it is, will not mark the offence—that that God whose providence rules the universe, will guide and guard you over the great and stormy ocean, which you tell me you are so soon about to cross ? Oh ! my sweet young

lady, do not mock the blessed book of God :— those lips were never formed for language so profane.’ And yet, Eleanor,” continued Harriet, “ I said nothing at all remarkable for either levity or profaneness. However, at that moment, I had some misgivings on the subject, for I could not help being somewhat awed by the solemn way in which the old woman spoke, and felt a kind of timid dread of—I knew not what, till —— I again forgot it, which happened fortunately a few minutes after. But her exhortation has not altogether been in vain, for I have had grace enough never to repeat the offence—in her presence at least—which comes in the end to the same thing, you know.”

The re-appearance of the person to whom she was referring, prevented the lively young lady from saying more.

And now, the candles placed upon the table, —the little lattice more securely closed,—the sisters disposed socially side by side, and the large folio Bible open before them,—we shall here leave them for a brief space of time, to relate, as cursorily as possible, so much of their prior history as may aid in explaining the position in which they have been introduced to the notice of the reader.

CHAPTER II.

" Life's little stage is a small eminence,
 Inch-high the grave above ; tha' home of man
 Where dwells the multitude,—we gaze around ;
 We read their monuments , we sigh,—and while
 We sigh, we sink ; and are what we deplored :
 Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot !"

ELEANOR and Harriet Marsden were the orphan daughters of a Scottish officer in the East India service, who, like too many others of his unfortunate countrymen, fell an early victim to the baneful influence of the climate, under which his professional duties compelled him to be constantly resident.

Major Marsden had maintained a high character in the world ; all had respected, and not a few had loved him ; many, from his talents and bravery, had predicted, that ere long he would hold a distinguished place in his country's regard, and in after years, when all this bright promise had been long buried with him—

self, it was still said by some with a sigh, "we shall seldom see his like again."

Endeared, in a remarkable manner, to all his friends and relatives, by a thousand naturally amiable and social qualities, his sudden and unexpected death, in the zenith of his days, and amid the gay and flattering prospect of high worldly distinction, had been severely felt and deeply deplored.

His widow, who had remained behind him in Scotland, being thus both bereft of a beloved husband, and disappointed in her ambitious hopes of wealth and honour, proudly retired from the scenes of her former happiness and prosperity, and relinquished, with a resolution worthy of a nobler principle, the high station in society, which she found that she could no longer support.

Her new place of abode was a small villa in a beautifully sequestered part of the country, at such a convenient distance from Edinburgh, where she had usually resided, that it answered her design of complete retirement, while at the same time it afforded her every opportunity of suiting her family expenditure to her altered circumstances.

She did not, however, long survive her hus-

band, and the frustration of her prospects. A few years afterwards she died, leaving her two daughters, then at the respective ages of twelve and fourteen, joint inheritors of the small fortune, which she possessed in her own right, along with the pension she herself enjoyed as an officer's widow, and which, through the influence of a friend in power, was now to devolve from the mother upon the children. Their fortune, therefore, if not large enough for gay and fashionable expenditure, yielded not only an adequate income for humble moderation, but was even sufficiently abundant for easy independence.

And now, committing the charge of her children and their small inheritance, to a lady, a distant relative of her own, who had lived with her for many years, and in whom she had the most entire confidence, Mrs. Marsden explained to her, at the same time, the various plans which she had intended, had life been granted, to pursue in regard to their education, and their future destinies; and which she enjoined her, as a faithful friend, still to prosecute.

With the exception of these worldly considerations, however, the last hours of this dying parent were not much embittered by anxious

forethought, respecting the two sweet orphans, whom she was thus in a manner leaving alone without a father's counsel, or a mother's care, —and that too at a time when they most required it,—to guide them amid the shoals and the quicksands of a deceitful world. Neither were her dying moments disturbed by agitating apprehensions about her own future welfare, as it concerned a coming eternity : on the contrary, even at this solemn hour, she seemed to enjoy a tranquillity of feeling respecting herself, and a confidence of hope relative to her children, which are seldom indeed to be found in circumstances so affecting ; and more especially among those whose hearts are bound to earth by a thousand tender and endearing ties.

Yet this was not the holy tranquillity of an expiring saint,—not the blessed calm resulting from a well-grounded confidence in that gracious God, who is the widow's stay, the orphan's shield, and the father of the fatherless.

But, alas ! this feeling was none other than the dread stillness of spiritual death,—the quiet of a heart absorbed in the world, wrapt up in the things of sense and sin, unconscious of danger, unawed by the solemnities of judgment.

and eternity ! How awful then the serenity of such a scene !—when the deluded soul is still clinging to the earth as its portion,—when the erring mind is still wandering in one or other of the many devious paths of sin,—when the unprepared spirit still deceives itself, gliding into the unseen wonders of the world to come,—tranquil it may be—yet having no religion to cheer, no hope to support it,—no God whom it adores, no Saviour whom it loves,—nothing to sooth the parting pang of nature's feelings,—nothing to impart a happy measure of holy resignation to the high command that urged the dreaded separation.

Religion had never been with her a familiar or acceptable theme ; for, although she had experienced a large portion of sorrow in the world,—had sustained some of the saddest disappointments of life, and had borne many a rough blast of adversity, yet she had never taken refuge in the Rock of ages, nor, throughout the whole of her earthly pilgrimage, had she ever sought succour where the wounded may fly for healing, and the weary for repose.

Alas ! no—amid all that ought to have rendered such a blessed resort dearer than aught that is dearest, never,—never had she drunk,

or been refreshed at the sweet streams of consolation presented in the Gospel.

And what an affecting scene, thus to behold a sinful being on the verge of eternity, sinking rapidly into the grave in all the fearful supineness of a deceitful dream, taking the last look of a receding world, yet clinging with greater eagerness to its vain enjoyments, as they became more distant and undistinguishable, and summing up the total of her existence in endless schemes of earthly greatness for her children, when eternity with its unknown,—unutterable grandeurs is opening to her view!

Oh! have the solemnities of such a moment no power to dissolve the fascinating charm which a vain world throws over the mind? Can wealth, or honour, or earthly friendship, or elevated rank, or high alliance, aught avail to stay the last sad consummation of all sublunary scenes, or even gild with one bright ray of satisfying thought the darkness of a dying hour?

CHAPTER III.

“ The spring-time of our years
Is soon dishonoured and defiled in most
By budding ills that ask a prudent hand
To check them.” *Cowper.*

AMONGST the plans of the deceased Mrs. Marsden for the future welfare of her daughters, there was one, which none but a worldly mind could have conceived, and which none but a heart involved in its deepest error, could have wished to see accomplished.

This was the removal of Eleanor and Harriet, whenever their education was completed, or as soon as their age rendered it of importance that they should begin to form good connections for life—from the beautiful spot where their childhood had lately been passed in peaceful and happy retirement, to the gay metropolis. For it so happened, that several of their relatives resided there, whose high

station in society promised to ensure to them an introduction into those polite circles ;—an honour to which their mother proudly conceived they were in all respects so well entitled.

Such ideas of the world being thus entertained, in connection with the remembrance of their mother's solicitude on the subject, and even in a great measure associated with the solemnities of her deathbed, is not surprising that a deep and powerful impression should have been produced on the young and ductile minds of the two orphans.

And, corrected or subdued by no opposing influence,—no salutary check,—no wise limitation, the pernicious tendencies of these evil principles only increased with their advancing years. Accordingly, no period of their existence was more eagerly anticipated, or involved so much absorbing interest, as that which was to set them free from the dull monotony of the country, transferring them to the gaieties and splendours of a crowded city. No stimulus acted so powerfully on their minds in the prosecution of their studies,—no motive roused their youthful energies to such vigorous exertion in the acquisition of varied, and rare accomplishments, as the bright hope of shining

as brilliant stars in the hemisphere of fashion, in which they believed themselves destined to move.

Often,—often in the indulgence of their favourite dream of happiness, would they stand, gazing on that part of the horizon, in the direction of which, lay the gay and fascinating city which was yet to be their home;—and then their hearts would bound with joyous feeling, at even the dim and shadowy view; and the distant sky would seem to glow with tints of azure, far more beautiful than they had ever seen adorning the canopy of heaven, above their own sweet, though humble home.

And often, for they had minds not dead to nature's charms, would they contemplate with delight, the gorgeous drapery of the sky, as the sun shed his parting rays on the vivid landscape, tipping with a thousand bright hues, the chain of hills, which afar off bounded the prospect;—and watch together the fairer moon, careering in the midst of her sparkling constellations, and the light clouds sweeping swiftly by, and ever and anon, in fitful fancies, overshadowing the pale brightness of the scene,—till all would appear to their admiring imagina-

tions, as it truly was, incomparably splendid and glorious!

• Albeit, this felicity was ever embittered with the corroding sigh of envy. How happier far were the inhabitants of yon fair city,—the goal of their desires—who enjoy scenes as lovely, and yet they mingle, with these pure pleasures, a thousand, and a thousand other nameless delights!

Alas! they knew not the world for which they sighed; nor yet the value of the rich blessings, which they enjoyed and slighted, when they would willingly have exchanged the sweet, and uninterrupted quietness of their present abode,—for the busy and the bustling scenes of life; the delightful calm of retirement, so congenial to holy thought, and placid feeling,—for the gay and giddy whirl of unhal-
lowed pleasure; the soul's joyful communings with nature, in its pure and peaceful loveliness,—for the heartless friendship of the votaries of fashion; the artlessness of unsophisticated character,—for the knowledge of a vitiated world's ways.

What a fearful weight of responsibility rests upon those, who have the guidance of the pliant mind of youth, and yet have failed in.

properly directing its moral susceptibilities ;— who have neglected to impress upon the heart, with all the solemnity of their unutterable importance, the exalted principles of the Gospel of truth, which it is their high and blessed privilege to possess. How deep the guilt of those, who have not merely refused to repress the quickly-budding tendencies of sin, but have even assisted in developing and maturing the evil principles of our nature, by exposing the unguarded mind to all the perils, which surround the gay and thoughtless, amid the scenes of folly, and of fashion.

And what a sad portion, too, for the bitter experience of many a future day, do such treasure up, for the hapless victims of their ill-judged indulgence ! A few,—a very few of time's fleeting years, will prove the utter emptiness of all the fair and enchanting visions presented to the imagination—will shew indeed, with stern truth, “what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue.”

The even-tide of human life, ah ! too quickly arrives, and finds those hearts, once full of warmth, and buoyancy, chilled by disappointed hope—those bosoms, once bounding with vivacity and ardour, beating with a palsied impulse.

How changed is every feeling,—every emotion!—nothing remains but the faintest semblance of what they were,—nothing exists but the sad remembrance of joys, that are now no more,—the bitter regrets of days, that are past and gone!

Behold a weary, and a wandering spirit, seeking rest, and finding none;—a feeble and exhausted frame, whose days are bitterness, whose nights are waking ages;—a dissolving nature, gliding into the grave and sinking beneath despair;—and confess what a ruin is here! Who can tell but the sweet flowers crushed, and the early blossoms blighted and withered in the chilling atmosphere of the world, might have bloomed, and ripened under the more genial sky of piety, and in time have been transplanted to the paradise above, ever verdant, fragrant, and immortal? Who can tell but these warm aspirings of the mind,—these “noble sallies of the soul,” which have been all expended in a fruitless pursuit after fame, or interest, or pleasure, might have issued in the better hopes of a glorious immortality, and rested securely for aye, on the Rock of everlasting strength?

Alas! we too often see the loveliest mos-

soms, and the sweetest flowers,—the loftiest movements of some powerful mind, and the fondest emotions of some warm heart,—all scattered and annihilated beneath the dire and the desolating effects of enticing sin.

CHAPTER IV.

“ How I dream'd of things impossible !
Of joys perpetual in perpetual change !
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave !
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life !
How richly were my noontide trances hung
With gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys !
Joy behind joy, in endless perspective !”

THE sun shone brightly in the heavens, without a cloud to intercept the splendour of his rays ; the birds were carolling merrily, and the air was breathing balmy freshness,—all, on the morning of the expiring day of Eleanor Marsden's eighteenth summer.

But it was not the dazzling brightness of the sun, nor the rich melody of the birds, nor the thousand sweets with which the air was perfumed, that caused the joy which burst from the glad hearts of the two orphan sisters.

Wherefore was it then, that their young bosoms beat with high delight, with almost rap-

turous emotion, as the morning of that happy day spread its rosy dawn around them.

Reader,—it was the day,—the eventful day when at length they bade their long wished-for last adieu to the peaceful and happy abode, which had so long sheltered their early years. Ah! what a jubilee of joy was theirs! All was gay—delightful—exhilarating—transporting! All was life, high hope, and happy feeling!

If their lip once quivered, or their eye dimmed with a starting tear, as they approached that part of the road, which was to separate their quiet home for ever from their view—and turned yet once and again, for the last parting look of the sweet spot, where they had spent so many happy days, endeared by the remembrance, mingling with their gayer thoughts, of an affectionate mother slumbering in the grave;—if their bosom once throbbed as they beheld each known familiar object—the smoke curling as usual in many a winding course—and the green lawn, with the flowering shrubs—and the clustering roses, which overshadowed the window of the little parlour, where they had been wont to pursue their morning avocations—and the row of tall pop-

lars, trembling in the breeze, that skirted the whole;—if these excited a single regret, or called forth a single tear,—it was but for a moment. The rosy lip was again smiling;—the blue eye clear as ever, and the throbbing bosom tranquil and calm, as the carriage, passing rapidly onwards, bore them at length to the great object of their loftiest desires and expectations.

Nor on their arrival in Edinburgh were they disappointed in the expectations which they had formed, of a warm reception from the relatives to whom they carried their introductory credentials.

Their father and mother, during their brief career in the world, had been esteemed and honoured; and although the grave had thrown around them the mantle of oblivion, yet now, in the unexpected appearance of the children, the remembrance of the parents was revived, and immediately mingled with a kindly feeling of affection for their orphans.

But this favourable impression—be it confessed—was greatly increased too, by the general belief which prevailed, of the young ladies' independence, and by the fact that thus they were in no condition to require the aid of

their friends beyond their countenance and regard.

Besides, there was nothing in the manners or appearance of these youthful strangers, to render any one ashamed of being connected with them in the closest relationship. In fact, there was a charm of native simplicity about them, extremely captivating, and which made ample amends for the want of a more polished mien ; whilst the liveliness of their disposition—the *naiveté* of their language—the playful yet becoming propriety of their deportment, as well as their apparent proficiency in the fashionable accomplishments of the day, rendered them peculiarly interesting, though, in strictest parlance, the *toute ensemble* of their demeanour might be slightly different from the general *ton*.

The very shades of difference which appeared in the respective dispositions of the sisters, were singularly pleasing.

Eleanor was of a calm, mild, and uniform temperament. Harriet was warm, sensitive, and impetuous. Eleanor was sweet and gentle, as the soft and balmy summer eve. Harriet was fresh and glowing, as the rosy laughing morn. Eleanor was bland, kind, and courteous. Harriet was gay, cordial, and ingenu-

ous. Eleanor was possessed of good natural abilities. She was very intelligent,—wrote well,—spoke well, and had the happy quality of appearing either when silent, or when engaged in conversation, equally graceful, attractive, and charming.

Harriet, however, was decidedly her sister's superior in judgment and understanding. She was, in fact, possessed of high powers of mind, and had her natural talents been properly cultivated, or rightly directed, her spirit would have taken bolder flights and soared far beyond her present frivolous pursuits.

But even under these disadvantages, her intuitive quickness displayed itself in a thousand fascinating ways;—in sparkling gaiety,—in smart repartee,—in pungent wit,—in a boundless exuberance of imagination,—in the happiest facility of apprehension,—in the acutest discernment of character, and in the most varied and original modes of thinking.

In one point of view, however, the sisters were much upon a par. They were both equally well educated. Indeed, to accord all due justice to the cares of their maternal friend, Miss Melville, no pains had been spared in the fulfilment of this part of her important trust.

Besides being completely proficient in the lighter and more elegant branches of female education, Eleanor and Harriet were well versed in general and useful information. Their reading had been judiciously directed. History in general, and the history of their own country in particular, that part of it also, with which were interwoven the interesting accounts of the struggles of Scotland, for the purity of religion, had formed, with much good taste, one of the subjects of their careful study.

Thus far we have seen them engaging, accomplished, and intelligent. But this was not all. The "Marsden sisters" were possessed of considerable personal beauty. Their light and graceful forms, untouched by the studied elegance of art, and their countenances shaded by a rich profusion of sunny ringlets, but beaming with looks of bright intelligence, and just partaking so much of their father's high contour of forehead, as to tell whose daughters they were, without possessing all the chiselled regularity of distinguished beauty,—all challenging unflinching admiration. The family likeness between them was great. But yet their expression of face was totally different. There was a life, hope, and energy sparkling in Harriet's

dark blue eye, and a bright glow of animation constantly playing over her expressive features, which never failed to distinguish her from her fair and gentle sister. Otherwise, they were

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet a union in partition,
Two lovely berries, moulded in one stem.

These considerations will therefore in some measure account, for the very cordial reception which Eleanor and Harriet experienced from their friends, and for those marks of flattering attention, which immediately followed their introduction to the world of fashion.

And now, we see them established in a handsome house, situated in an elegant square, with every object around them wearing the aspect of novelty and felicity ;—moving in the busy and the active scenes of life,—associating with people of novel and elegant manners,—mingling with gaiety and fashion, and beholding for the first time all the wonders of a splendid city. The lofty mansions,—the spacious streets,—the graceful crescents,—the princely palaces,—the beautiful intersecting grounds and gardens,—the mighty conflux of human beings,—the noisy dash of carriages,•

and the lovely aspect of the surrounding scenery, with the far extending ocean, the majestic mountains,—the verdant plains, and the thousand nameless and numberless beauties of the glorious and almost interminable prospect,—all,—all appeared to them in the simplicity of their first impressions, vast, and wonderful, and enchanting !

They were soon absorbed in the wild and giddy maze of pleasure, which had before been merely the day-dream of their imaginations. Their hearts bounded with hope, unlimited and unrestrained. Their bosoms beat with joy, unmingled with one thought of sorrow. Their eyes beamed with brightness, unsullied by a tear. Verdant and smooth—fragrant and lovely,—strewn with roses without a thorn, was the sweet pathway of prosperity which they had marked out for themselves in the journey of life.

And now, fairly admitted into the brilliant circles of fashionable society, their lively dispositions and high spirits made them enter with proportionate avidity into all the follies which surrounded them. As a matter of course, visit followed visit, and one invitation led to another. The season of annual gaiety

soon commenced, and forthwith balls, and routes, and plays became the engrossing objects of pursuit.

The improvement of their minds was for the present laid aside, and serious reflection never for a moment disturbed their tranquillity,—Miss Melville being perfectly satisfied, in all respects, if the manners of her youthful charge were in accordance with the prevailing *ton*.

Worldly honours thickened around the ill-directed orphans. They were flattered and caressed, and their society was extensively courted; while their own vanity was ever at hand, prompting them to believe themselves really worthy of the admiration with which they were regarded. Cordial friendships with their gay and fascinating acquaintances were at once formed, and quickly matured, and at length steadily established.

But—alas! the friendship of the world is like the mellow fruit, whose rosy ripeness oft conceals a growing rottenness within. The distinguished attention which Eleanor and Harriet received, arose, in fact, chiefly from the wealth which it was presumed, from their style of living, they possessed. For it is much

to be doubted, whether their amiable and conciliatory manners, or their attractive personal appearance, or even the powerful influence of their high connections, would have, independently of supposed wealth, gained them an introduction so readily and so generally, into the ranks of the fashionable and refined society of the metropolis.

CHAPTER V.

“ Earth teems with revolutions every hour,
And rarely for the better ;———.”

How trifling and transitory are all earthly enjoyments ! How worthless and vain are the pursuits of folly and sin ! The gay and giddy career of the sisters was soon covered by a thick cloud, which spread its dreary shade around them. Scarcely had a year rolled over their heads when, from the increasing demands upon their finances, they began to make a discovery relative to their pecuniary affairs, so alarming as to threaten to level with the dust, the lofty superstructure of pride and ambition which their fancy had reared, and to bury in its ruins, all their bright hopes, and their airy dreams.

The style of living, which they had adopted in conformity with their presumed rank in life, could not be sustained without subjecting them to a fearful additional family expenditure.

Thus, the one or two hundred pounds which had been saved from their annual income, by the rigid economy of Miss Melville, during the years of their former retirement, had now wasted entirely ~~away~~ beneath the deep and successive inroads, which had been made upon them: and even the greater portion of their small maternal fortune, had been swallowed up in the vortex of fashion

By this strange want of prudence, therefore, both in them and Miss Melville, Eleanor and *Harriet Marsden* felt themselves at length involved in some of the bitter cares and disappointments of life, of which they had often heard before, but which till now had never crossed their pathway—nor ruffled with a sigh, the tranquil smoothness of their bosoms—nor cast an obscuring shadow over the brightness of their sky.

And these were heightened by another cause. Their elevation in the world had been accompanied by a gradual, perhaps, but a marked change from the original simplicity of their character, and they had now contracted a habit of expenditure, without possessing the adequate means of indulgence, and had imbibed a taste for gay society and fashionable life, without the

remotest probability of being able long to enjoy them ; while, on the other hand, there had stolen into their minds, an increasing dislike of the calm sweetness and retirement of their former happier days. The idea of returning then, to their previous simple mode of life, in the natural employments of their own proper sphere, was far, indeed, from possessing any interest or attraction, and still farther from presenting any pleasurable anticipations for the future. Frustrated enjoyment—disappointed hope—wounded pride—the ruin of their numerous and varied plans of ambition, all conspired to forbid the thought of descending from the station in society, to which they had chosen to advance themselves.

But the circumstances were imperious, admitting no alleviation—no delay. The sacrifice must be made, cost what it may. And to this conclusion, with much bitterness of feeling, they at length came, upon summing up the total of their expenditure, and finding themselves reduced to the painful necessity of depending almost solely for their future support, upon their allotted pension, which, indeed, appeared to them a very inadequate source of supply.

But why had these important results never occurred to them before?

Though they might have been highly connected, and for a time have enjoyed the friendship of persons more elevated in rank than themselves, yet their orphan state, and more especially, their slender fortune, ought to have offered an insurmountable barrier to their ambitious aims of attaining an intimacy with the great.

This, however, was not the case. Youth in general is not the season of prudent forethought, or wise arrangement; especially when not blessed with a fitting guide to direct its erring steps: and present pleasure too frequently swallows up, in the eagerness of its mad pursuit, every kind of provident care and consideration.

CHAPTER VI.

“ ————— Hope smiled
And beckoned from afar ; —————.”

IN this posture of affairs, with the dismal prospect of being obliged to relinquish all that delightful interchange of gay and fashionable frivolities, to which they were now so devotedly attached, and of course of descending to the level of their former obscurity—our young friends suddenly resolved upon opening a correspondence with a near and wealthy relative, who resided in India, for the purpose of making him acquainted with the increasing difficulties of their situation.

This was their father's only brother, who had accompanied him on his going out to that country, and had remained there, although many years had elapsed since his brother sunk into a premature grave ; and was likely still to remain, till he too, should sink into the tomb.

He had still, however, by the natural strength

of his constitution, and his almost ascetic temperance, as well as the kindness of a superintending Providence, mastered the fatal insalubrity of the climate, and had continued for a long course of years comparatively untouched by the many deadly diseases, which had brought to an early grave hundreds of his countrymen, less guarded in their conduct of life—less gifted than he with a vigorous frame, and less blessed by the kindness of Heaven.

Upon the death of his brother, being now left to follow his own inclinations, which previously had been somewhat thwarted by considerations here unnecessary to be detailed, he had embarked his whole energies in mercantile pursuits.

Providence orders the lot of some to be rough and stormy, and of others again, to be smooth and tranquil; nor ought we to murmur at the one dispensation, nor rejoice too highly at the other. The shade and the sunshine—the bitter and the sweet—the whirlwind and the calm, so strangely chequer the scenes of life; that we can often only behold them in mute, though adoring wonder. *His* fate had been pre-eminently prosperous and happy. His worldly circumstances had never known

the receding tide of fortune's favour. Riches, honour, influence, and power had poured their collected abundance into his cup.

But the love of wealth^h is insatiable.—“ He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.” In the midst of rich and accumulated blessings, the sordid heart of man still sighs for something more. Even when life has been one bright chain of fortunate occurrences, the future seems to yield some brighter prospects still.

Thus it was with him. Every thought was engrossed by his riches and possessions ; whilst every decaying energy of his mind was still roused to vigorous exertion in pursuit of wealth or power.

This, alas ! was all his passion, hope, and joy.—His hoary head was not found in the way of righteousness, but he was vainly employed in grasping at a shadow—in trusting to the fleeting fancies of a deceitful dream !

Great and marvellous had been the accounts received from time to time, of his wealth and magnificence, by his relatives in Scotland ; and of course this did not fail to impress upon the minds of Eleanor and Harriet Marsden, the gratifying probability, that sooner or later,

they themselves, as the nearest heirs, might yet reap some of the fruits of his goodly heritage.

Nevertheless, this was but a golden vision in perspective.

A thousand chances and changes might occur to prevent its realization. A mighty ocean rolled between the orphan sisters, and their wealthy relative. But, a separation of thought—feeling and affection, intervened besides, mightier than even the vast distance of space itself.

In fact, in consequence of some slight difference, little or no communication had ever subsisted between the two sides of the family ; and since the death of their mother, the frigid correspondence, which she had deemed it her duty and her interest to maintain, had entirely ceased. And it had long been thought, and was now feared by her daughters, that their uncle's increasing prosperity, had buried alike the remembrance of his departed brother, and of his two surviving nieces.

Still, however, there is nothing in the wide compass of this world-like hope ;—"nothing like confidence in the guiding star of life—good

fortune." "What may result in good, cannot possibly involve much harm."

So sagaciously remarked Miss Melville, to her young friends, after much united consultation on the subject.

"Therefore, my dear children, make up your minds to address this unknown uncle of yours, and in doing so, we must just hope for the best, and leave the rest to existing chances. He is rich—unmarried—childless. To whom then, is it more fit that you should resort?—His only brother's only children!"

"But then, the old grudge he owed Papa," was Harriet's cogent doubt.

"To be sure, my dear, that is too true.—But it must only serve to moderate our expectations."

"Yet, surely, when I think of it," resumed the other, "the haughty old man will never rake up the ashes of the dead!—and for such a trifle too!"

"I never understood exactly," said Miss Melville, "the matter to which you allude. But I suppose, your Papa's authority was disagreeable to his brother; the former wished him to follow the profession he had first chosen—that of his own; but the latter wished to

change it as it pleased him : and so an alteration ensued—and this—was it not the whole of the mighty matter ?”

“ Precisely so—nothing more. He followed his own inclinations, and has succeeded in every thing far beyond, even, I believe, his highest expectations. He once wrote poor Mamma, that he owed all his prosperity to Papa’s death!—Was not that shocking? There were some ameliorating words, to be sure, about ‘ grief’—‘ untimely end ’—and so forth ; but that was the amount of it, I assure you.”

“ Our case looks threatening, Harriet,” said her sister, “ now that you remind me of these circumstances. I do remember Mamma used to call him very obdurate and unforgiving. Ah ! our effort, I am afraid, will prove, in the end, an unsuccessful one.”

“ Not at all—not at all,” replied Harriet, with more of her accustomed sprightliness of tone, than she had displayed for some time past ; “ we have but to appear to the old gentleman in our most winning guise ;—describe what excellent models of the human-kind we are, how clever—fascinating—sweet ! pourtray our beauty—~~manner~~—grace, and all

our varied charms ; and the finale of the piece will be, I am assured of it—‘ All’s well ! ’ ”

“ But then, love, the model will be of your own forming—the description made in *propria persona*—the portrait of your own painting ! And who will credit you ? ”

“ Well but—*query*—false or true ? ” laughingly rejoined Harriet, at the same time, rising and surveying the proportions of her figure, in a large pier mirror, and again turning round with no slight feeling of complacency on the score of her personal appearance, pourtrayed in the mock demureness of her countenance. “ If I said ‘ false,’ Eleanor—I would belie my conscience.”

“ Oh ! we are quite convinced of your integrity upon that point,” said her sister, with difficulty suppressing a smile ; “ but you forget, Harriet, that it is not the subject of our grave consideration at the present moment.”

“ Ten thousand pardons !—Dear ladies, let me not interrupt you.”

“ Come, come, my dear children,” said Miss Melville, “ no more of this trifling.—Let us now proceed to business. This matter has been neglected by far too long, and we must hasten to make up for our lost time, with all diligence

and dispatch. The present is a fit opportunity to apply to your uncle, and just address him, in as soothing, conciliatory terms as possible—as one whom you think yourselves honoured in no small degree in considering a very near and dear relative. This will smooth the way, and bring the statement of your own case pleasantly, as it were, before his consideration. And let every thing be plainly expressed. Withhold nothing—conceal no painful point—soften no circumstance; but place all at once, and fully before him. Young—unprovided for;—what is a paltry pension?—unprotected and friendless.—He may think of your mother's relatives here—but then, you know, we do not exactly wish to admit *them* into the secret of our difficulties. It would be the talk of the whole town!”

“Most assuredly!” said Harriet, looking somewhat alarmed.

“Most assuredly!” repeated Eleanor, with a slight shudder, indicative of still deeper perturbation of feeling.

CHAPTER VII.

“ The courses of the world have quite been changed.”

THE important letter upon which rested so many fond hopes, and brilliant prospects, was at length written, according to the directions which Miss Melville had given—most duly sealed—with all due honours superscribed, and with all due diligence dispatched.

And now, what next is to be said; or rather, what next is to be done? A very long time must necessarily intervene, before they can receive intelligence of the good or evil issue of their application to their uncle. How can this tedious period be passed, with even the most distant semblance of credit, to their fancied rank in the world? How are their arrears of polite and necessary hospitalities to be discharged, with any portion of the splendour and overflowing abundance which had formerly

distinguished their entertainments? How, in short, should they ever be able to struggle through the succeeding year, with all its varied prospective expenses, without an open disclosure of the pecuniary difficulties in which they were involved?

It is seldom, that in any emergency of the sort, worldly expediency finds itself utterly at fault. Not only has it always something ready to suggest, but likewise a kind of intuitive perception, of the fitting time for the exercise of its ingenuity. And strange would it seem, if, at the present moment, the fact had failed to be exemplified.

“Pray,” at length said Miss Melville, who at this moment of urgent need was indefatigable in suggesting schemes of relief, and disentanglement from their state of perplexity, “since nothing that we can devise will afford us the slightest hope of meeting existing embarrassment, without sacrificing what I tremble to think of—our place in society—what, pray, should prevent us from foregoing for a time our residence in town, which, however agreeable, we have certainly found to entail serious expenses, and by rigidly economising our expenditure, for a few months in the country, be

better enabled, on our return, to appear in the world as we have hitherto done? This, I am aware, is not an agreeable alternative.—But what else can be devised?”

A few moments of sad deliberative silence occurred, which was again broken by Miss Melville.

“ My dear girls, what do you think of this plan?—Yet, why need I ask? It is too plainly, the only thing which promises relief from our overwhelming difficulties, and, I trust, you will shew, by your ready acquiescence, that you can meet, with as much fortitude, the reverses of life, as you can enjoy with pleasure its more fortunate occurrences. I know it is a difficult lesson to learn, but your strength of mind will, I hope, enable you to submit to it. If you think, however, that you can devise any thing else, we shall still pause upon this determination, and ——”

“ Oh! we are afraid, dear Miss Melville, that nothing else can be devised.—We must just submit to the imperative necessity.” This was at length the subdued, though desponding, reply of the two young ladies. And of course it received its due meed of commendation.

“ I knew that you had too much good sense

to offer contradiction to the plan which I propose. Indeed, it has been my conviction for some time past that this is the only—the last resource, though I have hitherto been silent, merely from unwillingness to give you pain.”

“ But, Miss Melville, whither is it that you now propose that we shall bend our course?—to the North Pole, or the plains of Indus; for I think either is alike indifferent.”

“ Nay, my dear child, what hopeless despondency is this?—Where is your soul-enlivening cheerfulness, my Harriet?—Does it fail beneath this your first trial? Come, come, have you not every reason to presage that it will prove your last one?”

“ Ah! that I know not.—Misfortunes, it is said, seldom come alone.—I am almost prepared for a life of sorrow and disappointment; and it is needless to say any thing to remove the impression.”

“ Harriet, Harriet, can it possibly be, that you are speaking thus?—Nonsense, child, you are too young for sorrow yet.”

“ No, age, Miss Melville, is exempt from sorrow.”

“ Pshaw!—this is mere foolishness!”

“ You may call it what you will, Miss Mel-

ville," said Harriet, with offended feeling; "but I know that it is a foolishness which touches my heart keenly, and I wish, if you please, no more to be said about it. May I ask again," she added after a pause, which had more of sullenness in it, than became the sweet face upon which it sat, "where it is that we are going?"

"Can you not guess, Harriet?"

"No—no," repeated her petulant favourite, with no little indication of impatience, "I am in no mood for pleasantries. But if we are to leave town, let it at least be, to return to our own Green Vale,—our former residence."

"No, my love, that is impossible. Our expenses, by such a removal, would be greatly multiplied, instead of being diminished. Our destination, meanwhile, must be a humbler home. I was thinking that your old nurse, Mary's daughter, who, you know, lives only about twenty miles hence, would be very glad to give us part of her cottage. It is a quiet, retired spot, and we may be very happy there for a time."

"Oh! for my part, I know, that I shall be completely miserable in such a place!" tearfully ejaculated Harriet, her placidity being

no longer able to stand proof against the encroachments of her gathering vexation.

But here it would be tedious, as well as unnecessary, to particularize the many consolations offered, and the various arguments adduced, by the indulgent Miss Melville, with a view to dispel the clouds that thickened on the brows of her young charge; for although neither of them appeared to doubt either the justness or necessity of the conclusion to which they had arrived—it was difficult to reconcile them altogether to the thoughts of the change of scene and circumstance, which was shortly to take place.

At length, however, rather than incur the disgrace, which they conceived would be attendant upon the disclosure of their difficulties, they chose to retire from the scenes of gay festivity, in which they had acted so prominent a part—until time, or good fortune would enable them to resume, what they so constantly and so proudly termed, their “station in society.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ O ! blest is he who in the rural reign
Lists to the rustling of the wind-swept blade,
The whispering of the leaf, the hymn of bird,
The flow of rill, the torrent’s distant roar,
The burst of matin and of vesper song ;
And, whether Nature in the summer noon
Reposes deep, or sends her breezes forth,
Is ever grateful, loves her changeful face,
Prefers his peaceful cot with foliage deck’d,
To all the splendid domes that grandeur rears,
And, conscious of his happiness, contemns
The specious, heartless pleasures of the town.”

THE retreat in the country which Eleanor and Harriet were now obliged to embrace, afforded certainly more cogent cause for murmur, than did their former rural habitation.

It was a cottage of small dimensions, and somewhat rude appearance,—boasting neither much beauty of proportion outwardly, nor much elegance, in the kind and disposal of its interior household garniture. It stood alone—

unsheltered by any foliage of lofty tree, or shade of over-topping mountain ; but was alternately in its season exposed to the obtrusive rays of an ardent summer's sun, and to the dreary howlings of the storms of winter.

It was, nevertheless, sweetly situated on the green margin of a lake of considerable extent—whose softly-eddyding surface, sparkling in the light of a summer day, was bright, and calm, and clear; as the bold blue canopy that over-arched it ;—or whose waters, in the softened and still lovelier scene of a summer eve, would glisten, like a vast sheet of silver, in the pale melancholy moonlight.

Nor was the landscape in the vicinity, of a less engaging aspect, but presented a spectacle invested with a thousand attractions, to those at least, for whom there is a charm, in the rude simplicity of unadorned nature, or in the rich variety of fertile meads and plains.

The wild scenery of the adjacent dell abounded with much that was lovely in its rudeness. The dark form of the shady forest reared itself proudly beyond ;—whilst the mighty ocean might be seen from afar, mingling its azure waters with the surrounding horizon. Fields covered with produce, gracefully waving in the

wind, like the moving billows of the distant deep, and the rich untrodden verdure of the banks of the lonely lake, here and there diversified with scattered clumps of trees, like dark spots in a garb of green—all unobtrusively appeared in their quiet beauty, and mutely demanded the pure homage of unvitiated taste!

And here, at the close of a lovely autumnal day—in the humble rural residence we have just described, and in the neat little parlour—the only one which it contained, do we find our family party at length located.

And now, let us suppose the simple evening supper past—the snow-white cloth removed, and the small, round, brightly polished table replaced in its habitual position against the wall. Silence pervades the little circle, and each one is looking into the other's face, as if there endeavouring to trace some image of the slumbering thoughts within.

Far beyond the reach of mortal gaze, save of the unobtrusive inmates of the cottage, they are now, perhaps, tasting some of the secrets of retirement, and indulging in thoughts and feelings somewhat assimilated to the soft scenes and sounds around them.

Different, very different, indeed, were the

emotions which swelled, at that moment, in the bosoms of the sisters, as they surveyed their change of situation. Disappointment—chagrin, not untinctured with spleen—regret—impatience—dissatisfaction, and despondency, were a few of the most prominent, in the mass of heterogeneous feelings with which their minds were filled, and with which they had mentally greeted, on their arrival, the humble abode destined for the time to be all their home.

And are such feelings to be envied? No, indeed: Still less ought they to meet with sympathy, and least of all are they calculated to awaken a single spark of real esteem for the unhappy subjects of their power.

There are a few things, in fact, which tend so much to the accurate discovery of real character, as a consideration of it when detached from the commanding influence of society. Man is so constituted, that he cannot always present the same uniformity of appearance; and although the different alternations of his conduct, temper, and dispositions, may be concealed from the eye of observation, and may pass unnoticed and unscrutinized amid the noise, and the crowds, and the currents of life,

yet perhaps, when he has exchanged these for calmer scenes, when he is removed from the inspection of the world,—then it is that the various and chequered aspects, the lights and shades of his moral bearing cannot be disregarded,—cannot be disguised.

Thus it was with our two young friends. Moving in the gay and busy world, and mingling with those of the same cheerful age, and of the same tastes, habits, and pursuits as themselves; with their will never crossed, nor their vanity mortified, nor their pride rebuked, and with no blight of sorrow, nor of care, to ruffle the placidity of their minds, or disturb the urbanity of their bland demeanour, they had been accustomed to hear themselves lauded as no less amiable than lovely!—extolled as patterns of perfection in every virtue and in every grace!

The sweet incense of flattery thus poured into their ear, met with a ready reception from that self-esteem, so deeply implanted in the human breast, and so congenial to the thoughts and the wishes of the heart, and accordingly Eleanor and Harriet were quite disposed to believe what others told them, that they were possessed, in an eminent degree, of the sweet

and engaging qualities of amiability and good sense, in all their thousand nameless and attractive forms.

We have seen, however, from the simple consideration of the temper and feelings, perhaps unconsciously, displayed in the transition, from what was agreeable to their inclination, to what was necessarily opposed to it, that little claim can be sustained by either of them, to any of those excellencies of character and disposition, which invariably command our love and esteem.

And in being fully sensible of this, we can only, for the present, deplore it, without being able to hold out any immediate prospect of even a partial change, to a contrary opinion. But whilst continuing the recital of succeeding occurrences, let us breathe the fervent wish, that this happy change may not be very far distant, and that a larger measure of humbleness of mind, and contentment of heart, may still be the portion of the two orphan sisters.

CHAPTER IX.

“ ————— O, mon Dieu !
Après que ta bonté desarmant ta justice,
Aura mis fin au mauvais temps,
Alors Je sentirai ta main libératrice
M’enrichir de tous ses presens.”

Du Bosc.

AUTUMN, having poured on the earth its riches, had passed away. Its crisp leafy honours had duly covered the ground, and once these scattered remnants of decay had been buried in the dust. Winter, with its white robe, and its fierce frown, had saddened the verdant landscape. Spring, with its fresh-born budding beauties, had asserted its sweet dominion. And the sky had brightened in the splendid glories of the summer day, before we again present Eleanor and Harriet to the notice of the reader, who will doubtless be surprised to find, that during all these modifications of time's changing seasons, the sisters are still ex-

actly in the same position in which we left them.

But with this difference, that the roseate hue of health, which had somewhat faded away beneath a dense and smoky atmosphere, had now re-assumed its wonted glow upon their cheek—that the bitterness of disappointed feeling, if not subdued, at least, was softened, by the soothing lapse of time, and that Hope, though still in being, had lost a little of its brightness.

And besides these various shades of physical and moral change, there was a very visible alteration in the internal comforts and arrangements of the cottage. A nicer and neater mode of decoration prevailed in the little parlour; books—music, and assortments of the gossamer lady-trifles of the day; some of the appendages of higher household grade, yclept “conveniences,” and a few of the elegancies of more exalted station, had started into being, and seemed to have obtrusively superseded the characteristic simplicity which had once belonged to the little dwelling.

But although these were very plain indications of a more protracted stay in the country, than what its unwilling visitants had at first

intended, or than what, from the knowledge of their previous sentiments on the subject, we could conceive them capable of enduring, yet this was not the result of either altered taste or inclination.

Far from it. A circumstance had occurred at once disastrous and unexpected—of sterner reality than any which had led to their voluntary seclusion, and which threatened to involve them in greater calamities, than any that ever could, in their calculation, possibly befall them.

This was the death of the friend, whose kindness and influence had procured them the continuance of the pension enjoyed by their mother, and which ought to have terminated at her demise, as it had been granted in her behalf, and under her own special designation.

But upon the succession of another individual to the financial post under government, which this relative had possessed, and before the unsuspecting parties had even time to forebode evil, or prepare themselves for the blow, the pension, now, from their improvident expenditure, their only certain support in life, was withdrawn, and they beheld themselves plunged at once into all the distressing and degrading miseries of poverty and dependence.

But, how is it possible to describe the dismay with which this unexpected intelligence overwhelmed them? Alas! wherever they turned their thoughts, new horrors arose in every ghastly form, presenting on every side images of wretchedness and woe, as vast and fearful, as was the sad, sudden and terrible reverse of fortune, with which they had been visited.

If their eye rested on the *past*—Oh! what a paradise of felicity had they once enjoyed, which the depth of their distress had now invested with a thousand charms it had never possessed before! If they contemplated the *present*—they beheld nothing but a waste howling wilderness—an Eden blighted—barren—hopeless, and accursed! If they anticipated the *future*—scenes of still deeper desolation, and of more alarming magnitude, arose to their fancy's prophetic view. There they beheld their fond hopes dashed to the earth, like the frail ivy when the proud oak, round which it was entwined, is laid prostrate on the ground. There they beheld their roof-tree stripped of its rich and verdant foliage, and exposed to the merciless rage of the sweeping tempest. There they beheld themselves homeless and unshel-

tered—seeking a refuge, and finding none ; lowly and poor—despised and degraded—unnoticed and unknown—the sport of all the adverse elements of heaven !

A deep gloom settled on their brow—the joyful expression of their countenance fled—the playful smile passed from their lip, and the vivid glance of their hope-beaming eye, vanished away.

The emotions of pride in their bosoms were quenched—the feelings of folly in their hearts, were subdued—and their cheerful and aspiring spirits began to droop and decay.

They now spoke of themselves, in sad and desponding tones, as dead alike to fortune and felicity for ever ; and even the brilliant expectation of a rich, though distant inheritance, was swallowed up in the overwhelming tide of anticipated misery. Disappointment, with a powerful host of attendant ills, invaded their breasts. Sorrow, in deep successive streams, flowed from their hearts. Tears of bitterness, which had never dropped so bitterly till now, mingled with their cup of woe, and scenes of misery and misfortune, which they had never seen before, or of which they had only heard afar off, like the busy hum of the distant city,

breaking faintly on the ear—now seemed, alas ! to close around them with one fell swoop of overwhelming ruin.

What a poor portion is the world to an immortal spirit ! How vain and transitory are all earthly enjoyments ! How often do riches make to themselves wings and fly away ! How frequently are we disappointed in our fondest objects of pursuit ! How quickly are we torn from our most cherished earthly idols !

Now, what effects did this calamity produce upon Eleanor and Harriet ? Did it shew them the insufficiency, and the unsuitableness of the world as a portion ? Were they now convinced, under its chastening influence, that riches cannot command stable peace, or permanent felicity ? Was their ardent desire after the follies of life now somewhat subdued ? Was the magic charm dissolved which bound them to the earth ?

Alas !—it was not so. Afflictive dispensations cannot of themselves soften and renovate the heart, which often remains amid the whole, insensible alike to the voice of Providence—to the appeals of Heaven—to the impressive whisperings of conscience, and to the mild

pleadings of the gospel. The whirlwind may desolate the world—the thunder and the lightning may rend the rock, and the earthquake may shake the universal globe: But it is the still small voice that changes the heart—it is the sweet and gracious influence of the Divine Spirit that renovates the mind—it is the bright glory of the gospel, mingling its ray of purity and righteousness, with the mild beams of heavenly mercy, that regenerates the soul.

But varied and wonderful are the dealings of Providence, and soon one of its marvellous movements was disclosed to the view of the sisters.

By the interest of a friend, whom they made acquainted with their situation, a petition had been presented for the restoration of their pension; and after much difficulty—much exertion—much solicitation, and—what was still more galling to their proud spirit—much humble representation of their peculiar claims, and after days, and weeks, and months had passed away in fruitless application—the boon was at length granted.

Thus, at one time, we see the orphan sisters deprived of their little all, and sunk down to the earth with the weight of their affliction;

and at another, reinstated in the enjoyment of the enviable happiness of independence.

And here, how apparent was the interposition of Heaven in their behalf! What blessing and mercy were blended with the blow! If the waters of affliction had, for a moment, approached them, and swept with their angry surges over their pathway, they as speedily receded, melting into harmless wavelets. The clouds big with portending storms had just lowered above them—and passed serenely by. The sky had scarcely darkened at noonday—ere a cloudless sunbeam had again dazzlingly illumined it.

What an endless variety of sentiment and emotion is implanted in the human breast! How few minds indeed, seem to have been stamped with the same impress of thought, or cast into the same mould of feeling! What one sinks beneath, another bears with fortitude—what overwhelms the soul with sadness at one time, is borne, at another, with the calmest resignation.

There is also a beautiful corresponding variety in the Divine administrations, combined with an admirable adaptation of circumstances to the scene—of fitness to the subject—of

means to the end, in the wise and wonderful arrangements of Providence. He sends the tempest and the hurricane, to purify the ill-tempered atmosphere—or the genial shower, to water and refresh the dry parched ground—or the bright and warm sunshine—the clear shining after rain, to gladden the earth, and mature its rich and abundant blessings.

He extends, in the midst of the lowering aspect of the heavens, the deep—the mild—the mingling colours of the rainbow—that symbol of mercy—that token of grace. He sometimes visits his people with the blasts of adversity, and causes them to tremble beneath his high hand and his uplifted arm; yet he sustains by his mercy, while he humbles by his power. He stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind—He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.

He supports the weak, when sinking in his feebleness.—He comforts the sorrowful, when dejected in his sadness.—He sometimes smites the idol of their souls, and touches the tenderest affections of their hearts. But, in all, he is gracious in purpose—wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Lo, these are only a portion of his dealings, for his judg-

ments are a great deep, and his ways are past finding out !

The people of God are the objects of his peculiar care, and his over-ruling Providence, not only after they have been brought to a saving knowledge of Him—but even long before. He surely gives his angels charge over them, even when treading in the paths of folly and of sin.

What an importance, therefore, is stamped by this consideration on all the little incidents of their history ! And with this impression, let us watch the movements of the orphan sisters.

They had certainly been the objects of a benignant Providence, both in their fulness—in their fall, and in their after exaltation. But they had received all their mercies, with a cold and callous feeling. Their proud hearts had not bent humbly and submissively beneath the chastening rod ; neither did they expand with holy gratitude to that God, who had guided the varied workings of heaven in their behalf, and who had now dispensed to them great good, instead of anticipated evil.

Far different were the overflowings of their souls. They rather seemed to awake afresh

to a world of gay enjoyment ; and although their thoughts, for a time, had been more rarely directed to the great goal of their undying ambition, and although they had talked less frequently of their return to scenes of well-remembered pleasure, yet these thoughts and feelings had been absorbed in the deeper solitudes which had so unexpectedly assailed them ; and when all their apprehensions had vanished away, leaving not one of their dark forebodings to shade the brightness of their future days, the wild and airy phantasms of their imaginations returned.

Already was there a talk of town and its gaieties ! Already was the wish breathed for a speedy participation in all its numberless delights ! Already was the eye turned—and the step alert—and the thoughts full—and the buoyant spirit bounding forward—forward to things, alas ! as perishable as bright—as destructive as sweet, and as fleeting as gay !

Yet, why need we marvel at this ? Sooner may we expect to see the darkness become day, and the sun bedim his unalterable light, than the heart which beats but for itself—for its own indulgence—for its own vapid vanities—for what may feed its own unholy fires, as—

piring to higher and nobler aims—the glory of God, and the all-important concerns of the immortal soul.

CHAPTER X.

“ Go we, as well as haste will suffer us,
To this unlooked-for, unprepared, pomp.”

THROUGHOUT all the vicissitudes of which we have given the previous detail, no communication whatever had been received from their uncle in India, and up to that hour the sisters were exactly in the same state of suspense, respecting the success of their application as when it was first dispatched.

But time steals on—“ no agony lasts for ever”—painful uncertainty comes to an end. In proper time, and sometimes when we least expect it, all doubt is completely removed. And so, as Harriet Marsden stood one evening at the little window of her cottage home, regarding, in pensive mood, the heavens or the earth—we know not which,—seemingly keeping in store for better days, and the more exhi-

larating play of city life, all her lauded sprightliness—she perceived approaching—for she knew him well—the letter carrier, for all the surrounding extent of widely scattered houses, huts, and villages.

He looked in character too. His appearance betrayed considerable haste.—His heated brow, and travel-stained habiliments, gave ample indications of a long and recent walk ; whilst his countenance, true to the very spirit of his vocation, displayed just such a degree of self-importance, as seemed to warrant the conclusion that something of more than ordinary significancy was directing his movements towards this little mansion.

Harriet, it would appear, had communicated the tidings of his approach to those within, for in one moment, the whole trio, in eager anxiety, had assembled at the door, and in due course of time and trifling, they were at length actually blessed by receiving from the hands of this most welcome bearer of dispatches—a large and consequential-looking *paquet*.

Oh ! how their eyes sparkled with joy ! How their bosoms beat with hope, yet trembled with fear, when they perceived that it

was indeed from India, from their uncle—their proud and wealthy uncle ! And what was still better, the long looked-for letter proved to be, upon perusal, most favourable—yea, more highly propitious to their wishes, than their most sanguine hopes had ever dared to anticipate—than their fancies, fraught with brightness, could ever once have dreamed.

But we must hasten to lay before the reader, part of the contents of this important document.

After all due and somewhat formal acknowledgment of the receipt of their letter, their uncle entered immediately into the subject which had apparently called it forth : and regretting, seemingly with perfect sincerity, the depressed state of their circumstances, in a kind, though dignified and rather distant manner, he blamed them for not making him acquainted with their difficulties at an earlier date, as he should most certainly have felt as much pleasure, as he possessed ability, to assist them.

But ———, and here there appeared a slight admixture of wounded pride in the constrained expression of the few and forcible words in which his sentiments were couched—But, he hinted, that sufficient and suitable attention had never been accorded him, either in the shape

of regular correspondence, or acknowledgment of his authority and relationship in any thing regarding them ;—adding, that the spontaneous impulse of his own heart would have led him to befriend the children of his lamented brother, and to have extended to them all the protection and countenance which their orphan state so much required. But, since his interference in the management of their affairs had never been required, it had, of course, never been obtruded.

Now, however, as they seemed to wish that he should exercise some control over their fates and fortunes, he would be most happy to have them under his own immediate eye ; and, in short, concluded by inviting them to join him in India, where he should feel the greatest pleasure in presenting them to the world, as his adopted children, and the joint inheritors of all he possessed.

Directions as to the time, manner, and place of their embarkation followed, and a handsome remittance, almost a little fortune in itself, was enclosed for present expenses, and for fitting them to appear in India as be seemed his relatives. In a postscript, Miss Melville was mentioned as expected to accompany them.

And now, when all their bright prospects upon earth had so lately been nearly blasted, and when every thing which, in their estimation, could render life a blessing, had been all but annihilated, no mind can conceive the unutterable happiness produced by this epistle—no thoughts can trace the transports of joy which thrilled in their breasts—no language can describe, the strange—the wild—the rapturous concourse of feelings which were excited in their hearts! They knew not what to think—to say—to do! Surprise—delight—bewilderment—new hopes bursting into being, and a thousand other nameless emotions, mingling together in delightful tumult, sweetly agitated their happy bosoms, on this the brightest day that they had ever seen. It seemed to be all a dream—a splendid vision—a beautiful fantasy of the imagination! But it was all real—solid—certain!

How bitterly did they regret now their folly in having so long, and so thoughtlessly, neglected such a source of inexhaustible felicity,—such a world of wealth and splendour! But again half-uttered breathings of gay and glad-some congratulation, would announce their exultation, in having at last awakened to the

knowledge of the rich portion destined for their inheritance.

And next came bustle—business—happy, hurried preparation—Oh! what a time of transport!

But did no feeling of regret, for a moment, mingle in this bright throng of nameless, and numberless delights, whispering thoughts of the country, where the days of their childhood and youth had been passed? Did the idea of for ever quitting the green hills of their native land, not chequer with the slightest shade of sadness, the smooth unruffled bosom of high enjoyment, and gratified ambition? Was there no tearful tribute of love to leave behind in memory of the sweet though sullen shore, and fair though cloudy land, which so many feel it their proudest boast to term the spot of their birth, and the home of their early and happiest days?

None—none—no tears were shed—no sorrows breathed—not a sigh embittered the sweetness of the present bliss—not a cloud shaded the loveliness of the coming future!

Yet why should their be regrets when so rich a promise in a brighter land, was all within their view? Could the rugged, frowning aspect

of their mother land, with its steep, —its forests and its fells ; its angry torrents, its loaping cataracts—its feeble sunbeams—its ever-changing scenes of shade and sunshine, with all its thousand other peculiar marks of beauty or of blemish—be placed for one moment, in derogating comparison with the rich plains of India, enamelled with an infinitude of nature's choicest gems—and the clear, unclouded sunny sky—and the gaily flowering foliage—and the sweetly perfumed air of an eastern clime, where the wild palm trees, and the towering cocoas, wave their graceful forms in the balmy breeze, and the whole earth teems with the abundance of perennial beauty and fertility ? Can such scenes be compared ? Oh ! never.—So let it be. Time may perhaps elucidate the difference. Now, when the golden east was full in their fancy's eye, Eleanor and Harriet could form no apprehension, that sometimes while a splendid sun irradiates a smiling world, and light and gladness seem the rich inheritance of man—these same shining heavens may look down on many a languid eye, but yet impart no life nor brightness—that scented breezes may scatter about their accumulated sweets, but fail to lend a transient glow to many a faded cheek,

and that the gay and gladsome aspect of nature may shed—but—alas! in vain its sweet and soothing influences around many a bursting heart.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Le vrai bonheur de l'homme consiste dans le pardon de ses fautes, et dans la grace de son Dieu.” *Du Bosc.*

THEIR affairs being at length settled, and all necessary preparations satisfactorily completed, the fortunate sisters, and their scarcely less fortunate friend, left Edinburgh, whither they had gone almost immediately after the receipt of their uncle's letter, and proceeded by rapid stages to London, whence they intended to take their final departure from the shores of Britain.

But owing to the multiplicity of arrangements attending their fitting-out, and the kind attentions of their numerous friends, to whom they announced their happy prospects, they had lingered in Scotland somewhat longer than they ought to have done, and in consequence found, on their arrival in London, that the vessel

in which, according to their uncle's directions, they had purposed to embark, had already sailed.

And although the disappointment and vexation which this occasioned were almost intolerable, nothing now remained but to wait patiently for the sailing of the next vessel to the same quarter of the globe.

It was during this period of annoying procrastination, that Miss Melville began to think, that she might embrace the opportunity of passing the intervening time, before she should for ever bid adieu to her native land—with some of her own friends and acquaintances, who happened fortunately enough to reside in a village, not very far distant from London, where she had spent the greater portion of her early years. For although a long period had elapsed since she had seen them, or even communicated with them, and although she feared that many changes must have taken place in the course of twenty years, yet she now longed to look once more upon the place of a long gone-by but pleasant sojourn, and to acquaint her early friends with her own happy turn of fortune, and to bid a long and lasting farewell to the still beloved haunts of her youthful days,

AND THE TRIUMPH OF GRACE.

and the still valued objects of her youthful affections.

Accordingly, she at length decided ~~upon~~ accomplishing this projected farewell visit, and upon leaving Eleanor and Harriet for the first time since their mother's death, to their own care and guidance.

Before her departure, however, she thought it prudent to remove them, till her return, from the hotel in London, which they had occupied since their arrival, to the more fitting and secluded abode of the pretty cottage in the suburbs, with the description of which our narrative commences;—trusting to the novelty of the scene, and the beauty of the surrounding country, as well as to the good sense and intelligence of the mistress of the house, for affording or devising any thing to lighten the weariness, or ennui, which they might experience from the want of her accustomed society.

And thus Miss Melville's absence, after a long discursive ramble, at length brings us back to our two young friends, as they first come before us, in the interesting, though, on so serious an occasion, rather sportive light, of inquirers into their own character.

And no doubt the reader will remember the

occupation in which we left Eleanor and Harriet, upon entering into the particulars of their history, and the purpose for which they sat down to the perusal of the sacred volume whence emanates the knowledge of all good.

But here it may be proper to observe—what, perhaps, their manners and demeanour may have already sufficiently shown,—that these young persons were, in a great measure, ignorant of this precious book which contains the words of eternal life.

How seldom, indeed, do the things that belong to our everlasting happiness form any part of a polished or fashionable education. But, however deeply this is to be deplored, it sometimes happens, that when the value and importance of religion is at length brought under the serious consideration of those who have thus been brought up in almost habitual ignorance and neglect of its saving truths, and when its glory and brightness first shine into their souls, it takes a deeper and more potent hold of such, than it does of the frozen-hearted formalist, who passes through the regular routine of external devotion, according to custom—fashion—education—interest, or convenience.

‘There are often a genuineness of spiritual

feeling—a depth of holy heartfelt impression—
—a spirit-searching power of the word of God
—and a life-giving influence of the Divine
Spirit, constituting the vital principle of true
religion in the soul, experienced by persons
who have enjoyed comparatively but few ad-
vantages, while many are destitute of those
high and holy feelings, who have long possessed
exalted privileges to no avail—who have long
heard the gospel—but heard it in vain ! Alas !
the heart often becomes entrenched in its
apathy, and confirmed in its deceitfulness, by
the very frequency and formality of its cold
devotions.

But, to proceed :—

Deeply interested in the sacred truths, con-
tained in that volume, which had never before
been the subject of their serious attention, Ele-
anor and Harriet were astonished at the new
and strange intelligence presented to their view.
That evening flew quickly by.—Weariness was
forgotten—sleep vanished from their eyelids,
and they soon became absorbed in the deep in-
tensity of interest excited in their souls. The
model of human excellence for which they had
sought at first, soon faded from their remem-
brance. But they found a pattern of divine per-

fection in the pure—the simple—the sinless life of the adorable Redeemer—the meek and lowly Jesus.

And what an assemblage of infinite excellence did they find here! What mercy and compassion! What grace and condescension! What meanness, yet what majesty! Behold a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—stricken—smitten of God and afflicted; yet the Fellow of Jehovah—the equal of God—the brightness of his glory—the express image of his person! Behold he sighs—he weeps—he groans—he dies; yet he rises from the dead—ascends on high—rides upon the heavens by his name JAH, displaying all the perfections of the Sovereign of the universe—of Him who shares not his glory with any other!

Here was sorrow which never was equalled—love to God which never had a parallel—love to man which fills heaven with amazement, and eternity with praise!

Eleanor and Harriet were arrested by the lofty eloquence of the word of God—by the marvellous light—the bright beams of celestial glory—the unrivalled excellence which shone forth from its sacred pages; and they were awed by the power with which that word was

invested, enforcing its holy behests with all the sternness of uncompromising truth—with all the solemnity of their indisputable importance—with all the high authority of Heaven ; and they were touched by the calls and invitations—the pleadings and expostulations—the spirit-stirring appeals—the melting tones of mercy and compassion, which flowed from the lips of Him, who spake as never man spake ; and, above all, they were influenced by a Divine power, pressing home all upon their conscience—placing them in the presence of essential purity—throwing around their souls a portion of the unveiled glories of judgment and eternity, and commanding to silent subjection the proud and the rebellious thoughts within.

Ah ! what a night was this ! They sometimes read—they sometimes paused—they sometimes heaved a smothered sigh ; sometimes a silent tear would bedim their eyes, or steal from their eye-lids, and sometimes a sudden start would betray their awakened terror. And then they would breathe a vague wish to Heaven—or pour forth an unconscious prayer—or cast a supplicating glance to the mercy-seat, each crying from the very soul, “ God, be propitious to me a sinner ! ”

What a singular display was here of the plenitude of Divine mercy!—of the riches and adorable sovereignty of Divine grace!—and of the wonder-working power of the Divine Spirit?

CHAPTER XII.

“ The unfolding of Christ makes holiness at once practicable and precious.” *Bridges.*

THE serious impressions thus deeply implanted, were rivetted on the minds of the sisters, and increased by their growing acquaintance with Divine truth, in all its beautiful and blessed bearings.

By daily repairing to the sacred source of saving knowledge, they became more fully enlightened in their views of the transcendent value and suitableness of the gospel—of the glory and excellency of the character of Christ, and of the perfection and spirituality of God’s holy law. Still deeper conviction followed—a train of salutary reflection arose in their minds, and every new discovery—every fresh sense of the purity, perfection, and glory of the Divine character, brought along with it a correspond-

ing consciousness of the evil nature and destructive tendency of sin—of their own personal depravity in the sight of God, and the necessity of a blessed transformation of soul, through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Their views were indeed at first but dim, vague, and indistinct—but soon the mists of darkness having rolled away, they beamed forth with greater brightness.

Truth, as a celestial light shedding its soft radiance around their benighted souls, gradually stole upon their minds, dispelling, by its piercing rays, yet more and more of the clouds and gloom which obscured their dawning day of grace. The Spirit of the living God shed a heavenly halo around them, removing the vail of unbelief which rested on their souls, and unfolding some of the vast glories and realities of an eternal world.

Now, the unnumbered excellencies of the whole system of the Christian faith, hope, and love—the brightness and the majesty of a sin-aborring God—the unsullied purity and perfection of his holy law—the infinite glories of the work and character of the Divine Saviour; the beautiful—the free—the perfect adaptation of the gospel; the rich—the satisfying—

the immutable nature of the blessings of salvation—burst upon them with all the combined fulness, beauty, and clearness of intrinsic perfection.

What a wonderful transition! They were now translated from the power of darkness into marvellous light. They were now ushered, as it were, into a new world. All old things had passed away—behold! all things became new.

What a change in their ideas of religion! what a change in their views of their own character! That they were sinful, depraved, and lost, had never till now, in the remotest degree entered into their thoughts. Apprehensions of sin and of wrath—of death, judgment and eternity, had never before disturbed, for a single moment, the tranquillity of their minds.

But now, they were astonished and alarmed at the unequivocal and undisguised display of the guilt, depravity, and enmity of the human heart, as delineated in the sacred volume—at the deep corruption of their whole nature, and the vanity—the folly, and the sinfulness of their whole lives.

Ah! yes; they could now indeed apprehend somewhat of the guilt and danger of those pursuits which had hitherto engrossed their

thoughts—captivated their hearts, and occupied so large a portion of their time and attention.

Bitter, indeed, were the regrets which arose in their bosoms for the irretrievable loss of this past period of their existence, frittered away without the most distant thought of an eternal world—without the knowledge, love, and worship of the true and living God, and even without the slightest apprehension of the awful and inevitable ruin, attending a course of thoughtlessness and sin!

But now, convinced as by the power and brightness of a sunbeam, of their deep responsibility to the Judge of all, they felt themselves in the hands of the living God—trembling in the presence of the heart-searching Jehovah, without a covering to shield them from the fury of the impending tempest—without a shelter from the dark thunderbolts of heaven, save in Him who is an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest;—a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and a refuge from storm and from rain.

CHAPTER XIII.

" O how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan !
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity."

THE change produced in the soul by Divine grace, is great and wonderful. It is the work of Omnipotence—the doing of the Lord, and marvellous in our eyes : distinguished and rendered illustrious, by the united glories of Divine love, power, and mercy.

The circumstances connected with it, may be marked and decisive, or they may be more serene and gradual. But the change itself, is the work of a moment ; and thus it is emphatically termed, a new creation—a spiritual resurrection—a regeneration of the soul.

The Holy Spirit given—the marvellous light bestowed—the full pardon granted, and the Divine life imparted, are all the instantaneous results of infinite power, and redeeming goodness.

Yet, there is a blessed progress in the future stages of the Christian course, which is peculiarly expressive of the wise and wonderful operations of the Holy Spirit in the human soul. The principle of Divine life, so powerful—so firmly implanted, daily increases in its strength and holy excellence. The light of heavenly influence, shed abroad in the heart though at first but faint and feeble, gradually grows in power and brightness. The clouds that intercept the irradiating beams of the Sun of Righteousness, are one by one dispelled—"the path of the just is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

And hence this progressive course is illustrated in the word of God, by a variety of beautiful and striking images.

Sometimes it is compared to a journey, to mark the onward movement of the child of God, as he goes from strength to strength till at last he appears before God in Zion. Sometimes it is likened to a race, to express his rapidly ad-

vancing step, combined with his active exertion, and unwearied constancy. Sometimes it is represented, as the bold flight of an eagle toward heaven, to pourtray alike, swift and continued motion, and the celestial tendency of the heaven-born soul.

This progress, however, is often greatly retarded. It is not simply a journey—a race—a pressure toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus : but it is also a warfare—a strife—a struggle. It is a rough and narrow path, which leads to everlasting life.

The Christian does not always walk in the light of his Father's countenance. He does not always pursue his way in the cheering light of day, and beneath serene and unclouded skies. His course is oft-times chequered by much painful and severe, but salutary discipline.

There are, indeed, many obstacles to be removed—many difficulties to be surmounted—many dangers to be shunned—many foes to be conquered—many strongholds of the heart to be invaded—many snares and subtilties of Satan and the world to be avoided or repelled ; much deep remaining depravity of soul to be subdued—much blessed conformity to the Di-

vine image to be attained and matured—much humble fervent prayer to be offered up—much holy and devoted zeal to be exercised—“striving to enter in at the strait gate,” before we finish our course with joy, and sit down with Jesus on his heavenly throne, amid the blessed fulfilment of our former bright anticipations of everlasting bliss.

We have every reason to believe that both Eleanor and Harriet had been made the subjects of a real and saving change of heart.

Both seemed to have experienced the same awakening of soul, leading them to feel the same deep interest in the concerns of eternity—to embrace the gospel with the same warm transport—to drink of the same living stream, and to run on in the same glorious and happy career.

Yet the change did not operate in the same manner, nor arrive ultimately at an equal degree of strength and steadfastness, in both the sisters.

Harriet, who had always been considered gayer, sprightlier, and more thoughtless than Eleanor, was now more deeply impressed than her sister with the truth and importance of Divine things; her impressions were attended

with more lasting results, she imbibed with greater ardency the striking, sublime, yet simple truths presented to her view in the gospel of Jesus, and she manifested eventually more of the influence of Divine teaching upon her heart and life.

The more she studied the word of God, the more fervid were her feelings—the more deep and powerful the impressions on her heart—the more pure, and elevated, and heavenly, and abundant were her devotions, her desires, her enjoyments, and her zeal.

Her natural disposition, perhaps, contributed not a little to the decision, as well as to the steady improvement, which, from the very commencement, marked her Christian character. For although it is indeed true, that the riches and adorable sovereignty of Divine grace are displayed altogether irrespectively of any supposed excellency in the objects of its benign influence, and appears in the triumphs of its majesty, from first to last, in the glorious attitude of grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord ; yet when amiable natural character and high talent are invested with the robe of real piety, and are brought under the strengthening, the in-

forming, and the expanding influence of the gospel of truth, they often appear transcendently great and excellent.

Thus it was with Harriet. Of a warm and buoyant temper, and of great quickness of intellect, united to uncommon vivacity of spirit, she was a universal favourite, and scarcely ever failed to attract the regard, not only of the young and gay, but even of the more thoughtful and observant.

Though somewhat hasty, she was open, frank, candid, and forgiving; these characteristic traits being again happily combined with ardent susceptibility of feeling, which rendered her—what perhaps, without this sweetly modifying influence, she might not so uniformly have been—kind, amiable, and affectionate.

She had ever been more ready of access than her sister. That hauteur which would have prompted to a distance of manner, or a proud reserve towards her inferiors, could never be reckoned amongst the number of her faults. Indeed, it had been registered as a standing crime against Harriet, that even in her childhood, she would rather steal a romp with the little barefooted peasant girl, who ran the errands for the Lady of the Vale, than walk with

fitting quietness and decorum with her mamma and sister, along the finely gravelled walks that intersected, or surrounded, the lovely lawn, before the villa of the Vale.

And this early—foible, shall we call it?—had survived the lapse of several years, and even now in the plenitude of her prosperity, she was still to be found the same frank, open and ready companion, as she had ever been in her earlier days, and her humbler condition.

During the first period of her residence with Widow Linmore, whilst Eleanor, though generally of a bland, sweet, and courteous, though cold demeanour, would sit in silence and solitude, shrinking from all but absolutely necessary intercourse with persons of a lower rank—Harriet would frankly exchange all manner of kind greeting with the inmates of the cottage, and in particular with her landlady, whom she reported to her more retiring sister, as a highly conversable, intelligent, and amusing individual.

And such a circumstance had so frequently occurred, and was deemed so incorrigible a fault, that Eleanor, like Miss Melville, had long ceased to address to her a single word of censure, or reproof, upon the subject.

Deeming it, therefore, but one or another of her wayward fancies, Eleanor was not in the least surprised to find her gay and volatile sister engaged in even more than usually close, frequent, and earnest conversation with the "pious, quaint old lady," as, in the first days of their acquaintance, Harriet playfully and somewhat scornfully used to term her landlady.

Happily, however, at this moment, Harriet's intimacy with Widow Linmore, was prompted by a higher motive, and afforded her a purer source of enjoyment, than she had ever known in her thoughtless days, when she sought her for the purpose of beguiling away an idle and tedious hour.

Widow Linmore—as she was familiarly termed—although she occupied an humble station in society, and was enabled only by much care and prudence to wend her way honourably through life, was possessed of properties, both natural and acquired, which many of far more exalted rank would have been proud to own.

Christianity improves and enlarges the mind—softens and refines the manners—elevates and strengthens the moral principles of man.

Widow Linmore was shrewd, active, sensible, and intelligent, combining with her other excellent qualities, a tone of pious feeling, which pervaded the whole tenor of her life, and threw around her humble character, a cheerful yet a dignified solemnity.

Her Christian excellence had been also much improved by the circumstances of a life chequered by many dark and frowning scenes. She had drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow, and yet had enjoyed, in all her trials, the soul-sustaining aid of the Father of mercies.

Such was the humble but honoured instrument, who now performed the part of a spiritual counsellor to our young friend, and to whom she was so deeply indebted for much of her progress and proficiency in heavenly knowledge.

Widow Linmore had, from the very first, been greatly interested in the two young strangers, who had taken up their abode with her. And this interest was increased from a sense of gratitude to a gracious Providence, who had so wonderfully directed their steps to her humble mansion, when she was just beginning to augur an entirely unsuccessful season for her little apartments.

The absence of Miss Melville, their elderly companion and constant director, had placed the two sisters under her more immediate care, and had awakened in her bosom almost a mother's tenderness towards them.

And this care and tenderness were not lessened, but augmented, by perceiving their habitually gay and careless demeanour. She beheld, amid their gaiety, the actings of an unrenewed heart; and, in the midst of much that was naturally sweet, amiable, and fascinating about them, she saw a deep forgetfulness of divine things, and the whole energies of their immortal souls, which were originally destined for the love and service of the living God, centred in the things of time—spent in the service of sin—wasted in grasping at a fleeting shadow, in trusting to an airy dream—devoted to the vain pursuits of a quickly passing life.

Ah! how bitterly did the good old woman lament their folly! How anxiously did she watch over them, in their moments of thoughtless security; and how fervently did she pour forth her aspirations on their behalf, at the throne of mercy.

With what gratitude, then, to Heaven, did

she greet the first faint dawning of the day of hope, when so rich a measure of divine grace was poured down upon their souls ! and, more especially, with what holy joy and satisfaction did she behold, by the blessing of God on her humble endeavours, the honoured work prospering in her hands, and the frank, warm-hearted Harriet rapidly and steadily advancing in the paths of immortal life.

Gladly—most gladly did she listen to her inquiries, or remove her perplexities, or resolve her manifold doubts and difficulties, or present to her expanding mind, a brief solution of some of the deep, or dark, or mystical meanings of the word of God.

Yes—this was indeed a time of happiness to the lonely widow, which made ample amends for whole preceding years of sorrow, struggle, and distress.

In the fulness of her joy, she was alike unbounded in her hopes, and unwearied in her exertions. Daily did she explain the great doctrines of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Daily she instructed, directed, and stimulated her interesting pupil forward in her high and heavenly career. Constantly did she urge upon her the necessity of a holy life, and

of the unhesitating surrender of the whole heart to God. Constantly did she place before her view, the exalted felicity connected with religion, even in a present life,—with the sweet hopes, and bright prospects, and everlasting joys of the life to come. Constantly did she exhibit the cross of Christ, as the only ground of a sinner's hope—the only centre of a Christian's glory—the only source of unfailing consolation in the hour of sorrow—the only refuge of perfect and peaceful security in the moment of death.

This was the subject upon which she ever delighted to dwell ; and she would expatiate upon it with all the solemnity, earnestness, and eloquence of one enraptured with the high and hallowed theme, as the richest display of the mercy of Heaven—the grandest manifestation of the love of God—the brightest effulgence of the glory of the Deity—the sweetest assemblage of infinite perfections, which could possibly be presented to the devout and adoring contemplation of the child of God. Here he would learn more than mortal tongue could tell, of the unfathomable depth of the wisdom—the love—the compassion, and the power of Him, who had conceived and consummated

the mighty and amazing scheme of full, free, and finished salvation to guilty man. Here he would behold, in ineffable loveliness and excellence, the plentitude of the mercy of Heaven—the glory of a crucified Redeemer—the infinite value, the eternal efficacy, the suitableness and sufficiency of his finished work, placed as the ground of hope, in beautiful and spotless contrast, with the guilt, depravity, and worthlessness of man.

Thus was Harriet blessed, in an eminent degree, in enjoying the instructions and guidance of this child of God. And rapid was her progress—great was her improvement under her singular advantages.

Different—very different indeed, were now the feelings with which she regarded the lowly Widow Linnmore. With what respect and veneration did she now view her, and with what satisfaction and delight did she receive her instructions!

Her mind naturally never either proud or haughty, imbibed with proportionate readiness, the softening graces of a meek and lowly spirit; and often might she be seen, listening to the language of her humble friend, in the attitude of earnest and reverential attention, with a

cast of seriousness on her youthful countenance, which had seldom been seen before, and which, though it slightly shaded its mirthful aspect, took nothing away from its calm, sweet, and expressive loveliness.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ But in his duty prompt to every call,
He watched, and wept, and prayed, and felt for all,
And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt her new fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dill delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

BUT there was still another circumstance, not yet mentioned, which aided not a little, by the blessing of God, in strengthening and maturing the seed of eternal truth, which had been thus graciously implanted in the heart of Harriet.

Through Widow Linmore's advice, she had been induced to attend the ministrations of a worthy clergyman in the neighbourhood, and she thus enjoyed, for a season, the blessed privilege of hearing the gospel in its purity and simplicity, as well as of seeing it exemplified in its heavenly influence, in the holy life of a devoted servant of the living God.

This venerable man was possessed of excel-

lent natural talents, which had been largely improved by the advantages of a liberal education. He was a native of Scotland, and had studied for a considerable number of his earlier years at the university of the northern metropolis.

He was a man of extensive reading, deep study, and high attainments. His mind was enriched from the treasures of theological learning, contained in the writings of the ablest divines, both in his own, and the learned languages.

But the word of God was the chief subject of his unwearied and delighted study, and all the vast stores of his knowledge and learning were made to bear upon the lucid illustrations of the holy Scriptures.

Amidst the difficulties and discouragements with which he was surrounded, and the opposition which he encountered from an ignorant and prejudiced population—this devoted minister had still persevered for upwards of thirty years, in his honourable but arduous work, with unwearied assiduity, undaunted courage, and holy delight; reclaiming the wicked—instructing the ignorant—proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to guilty sinners; or pre-

senting the rich and abundant consolations of the Gospel, to God's peculiar people, till, through the divine blessing on his abundant labours, the moral wilderness around him had been made to rejoice and blossom as the rose.

And now, when his hoary hairs were mingling and multiplying, and when the snows of sixty years were scattering their honours around his venerable head, and when time had formed its accustomed furrows in his cheek, and when his once erect and noble form, partook slightly of nature's first decays—he had only gained the wisdom of age—the matured experience, and the exalted piety of the well-tried saint, without having lost any portion of the ardent zeal, and the holy activity of his earlier years.

His elevated devotion—his love to God—his compassion to man—his diligence in duty—his exertion to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of man—his meekness, patience, gentleness, and love—his tender charities—his unwearied exertions—his diffusive goodness—all the moral and spiritual excellencies of his character, still beamed with undiminished brightness, shedding on all around him, their benign and blessed influence.

The energy, talent, and eloquence which had formerly distinguished his name, and gained him even the tribute of the world's applause, still existed in the zenith of their strength. His illustrations of Scripture were luminous—his addresses to the conscience were powerful—his bursts of holy appeal to the heart, seemed almost irresistible. His sacred eloquence would sometimes rush like the sweeping torrent—or move gently along like the soft murmurings of the tranquil stream. Sometimes it would awe, like the trumpet of the battle—or soothe, like the melting tones of seraphic song. Sometimes it would alarm, like the earthquake and the whirlwind, shaking the earth and rending the rocks—or console, like the still small voice, mingling its merciful breathings amid the thunders of heaven.

Such was the highly gifted pastor—the venerable father in Christ—the holy man of God, whose faithful and affectionate instructions—whose holy and heavenly counsels, both in public and in private, produced the abundant and blessed effects on the mind of Harriet, which were so apparent in the subsequent steps of her Christian course.

CHAPTER XV.

“ The heart surrendered to the ruling power
Of some ungoverned passion every hour,
Finds by degrees the truths that once bore sway,
And all their deep impressions, wear away.”

ALTHOUGH Eleanor appeared to have experienced the same wonderful awakening of soul as her sister, yet the impression was not so deep, nor the interest so great and lasting; neither were her views of Divine truth so full and clear, nor the effects of the change so marked and decisive, nor distinguished, in so remarkable a degree, by their strength and steadfastness.

There was still in her mind a lingering desire after the world,—its honours, riches, pleasures and pursuits. And although the good seed, to the praise and glory of God, fell not among thorns, neither on the stony ground, yet it certainly took root in a far less productive soil than in the case of Harriet.

The sweet bursting of the new-born blade, in all its budding tenderness, and delicately verdant beauty, is not, in all cases, succeeded by the strength and luxuriance of maturer growth. It is often arrested in its fair but fragile course, by the cold blight of a passing blast—or it languishes in its weakness—droops and dies beneath the scorching heat of the noon-day sun. The richest foliage, and the loveliest blossoms are not always followed by the most abundant fruits.

Harriet's progress in the Divine life was steady as well as rapid, whilst Eleanor's quickly began to decline. As Harriet's anxieties increased—her's diminished. As the mind of the former became more gradually illumined by the light of the Spirit, and the glory of the truth, the mind of the latter seemed to be re-tracing the dark paths of folly and of sin from which she had so lately emerged.

She grieved God's Holy Spirit—she resisted his heavenly influence, so rich, so ready to be shed around her, in all its divine power and fulness; and accordingly, his gracious presence was withdrawn—his sweet communings with the soul were suspended—his heavenly and delightful emotions vanished.

The deep intensity of interest experienced in the commencement of her course, had now become feeble. She had left her first love—the fervour of her first impressions had fled—the moments of holy enjoyment, formerly experienced, existed no more—the warmth of devotion which had once glowed in her soul at the throne of grace, was now lost or languishing. A cloud of darkness was stealing insensibly over her mind. The dread subtleties of spiritual death were beginning to assert their power.

But although she was not fully aware of the danger of her decline, she could not be utterly ignorant of its existence. Eleanor was not happy. The recollection of past enjoyment,—now vanished and gone, would sometimes disturb the tranquillity of her thoughts—or conscience would sometimes whisper that all was not right within—or the Holy Spirit would not cease to be her salutary monitor—or some remembered portion of the word of God, would shoot like an arrow through her heart, and awaken afresh her fears and her alarms.

And at such moments she would insensibly be led to compare what she now *was*, with what she *had been*, and then a deep sigh, or a silent tear would announce the agitation and

the unhappiness within. Sometimes too, the eager, the pathetic, and the eloquent appeals of her sister, would arouse the slumbering emotions of her mind, and for a moment would bring her back to a sense of her great and aggravated sinfulness towards God. Her past transgressions would rise like mighty mountains before her, and she would be filled with a thousand various and painful emotions. To remain, indeed, unmoved by the powerful pleadings of Harriet, or untouched by her glowing language, or unaffected by the deepness of her sorrow, as she deplored the melancholy decline of one so dear to her, seemed utterly impossible. And thus the almost expiring spark was partially rekindled, and graciously preserved from being altogether extinguished.

Ah ! how deeply did Harriet lament the sad relapse of her sister, and urge her to a wiser determination by all the mighty moral motives of the gospel, and unfold to her view all the rich enjoyments and heavenly allurements, which she had herself experienced. But alas ! her expostulations were attended with no corresponding result. “ Yes, yes,” would be the impatient reply, “ what you say is true—I do not

deny it ! But every thing in its proper place. We may be religious enough, without being enthusiasts. We are not required to give up the world, and all its enjoyments—to think—to speak—to dream of nothing but religion ! This is enthusiasm—not religion.”

“ Ah ! Eleanor,” would Harriet sadly say, “ how deeply am I grieved to hear such sentiments proceeding from you. Is it now indeed necessary to remind you, that supreme love to God forms the very sum of real religion ?— And yet it is so. The enjoyment of God as the CHIEF GOOD—the portion of the soul, constitutes the very essence of true felicity. If religion be *any* thing, it must be *every* thing. The place which it claims in the heart is supreme—the influence it maintains in the life is pre-eminent. It requires nothing less than the surrender of the whole heart—the devotion of the whole soul—the obedience of the whole life. It breathes in our devotions—sighs in our sympathies—weeps in our compassions—glows in our affections ;—shines like a radiant beam, in and around our whole earthly course—flows like a living stream through the whole of the pilgrim’s path—moves like the life-sustaining fluid that circulates through every vein.

—Ah ! dearest Eleanor”—would she continue with affectionate earnestness—“ why have you come so quickly to a conclusion on so all-important a point ? Why have you passed over so lightly, and resolved so easily, a question so momentous,—pregnant with consequences so bitter, or so blessed—involving the interests of the soul throughout an endless eternity ?—Oh ! pause in your career. Ponder the path of the world and of sin, and think of the fearful termination of such a course of folly. And above all, pray that God, by his Spirit, may visit, enlighten, and sanctify your soul. Urge this request constantly—daily—hourly. If you do not—if pleasure, gaiety, amusement, be still your cherished objects of pursuit—oh ! how dreadful the result ! Eleanor,—is such the sad end of the happy day that dawned so brightly around us ? Are those delightful moments, so sweet, so rich in blessing, fled for ever ? And will you now leave me to pursue the path alone, which you yourself once acknowledged to be so holy and so happy ? Say, Eleanor, can this be so ? Are you quite prepared to renounce your former hallowed hopes, for a vain and worthless world—to relinquish the reality of that portion which is eternal, for a vision—a dream—a sha-

dow ? It cannot be—I will not believe it—I shall still cherish the fond hope, that you will yet seek after God and holiness, and thus render my desires—my happiness on earth, complete.”

To listen with indifference to Harriet's impassioned appeals, was impossible. Her touching, yet affectionate remonstrances were so powerful, that she carried her sister irresistibly along with her, in the current of her own anxious and impetuous feelings.

Eleanor was often deeply affected, and would resolve, even with tears, to become all that her sister could ask or wish, and would with seeming sincerity determine to make a complete surrender of her heart to God, renouncing, for the sake of Christ, the dearest objects of her ardent pursuit, and resisting all the temptations, or allurements which sin, or the world, or her own heart, might oppose to her progress in the path of life.

But, alas ! these seasons of reflection did not long continue. The fleeting impression would vanish away like the morning cloud, or the early dew, and all the solemn resolves of the prior night would seem to be scattered by the first rays of the rising sun.

It is not every fleeting emotion of the mind—every warm impulse of the imagination—and every trembling fire of the heart, that is produced by the genuine work and operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Les choses du monde et celles de la religion sont infiniment différentes ; et autant que Dieu diffère de l’homme,—l’ame du corps, et l’éternité du temps ; autant ces deux sortes de choses sont-elles disproportionnées et dissemblables.”

By some further unforeseen, but necessary preparation, the departure of the vessel, in which our little family party intended to take out their passage to India, was delayed considerably beyond the time originally specified.

And Miss Melville, being satisfied of the young ladies’ welfare by frequent correspondence with them, took advantage of the circumstance to remain a little longer among her friends.

The inmates of Widow Linmore’s quiet cottage had therefore ample leisure, for employing themselves in any way most agreeable to their own wishes.

Eleanor passed her time in alternately fret-

ting at the long stay, which Miss Melville so unseasonably made—in forming good resolves, but, alas! as often breaking them—in meditating on her brilliant prospects—in discoursing of the riches, and beauties of the land of her destination, or in assorting such of her stock of elegant and fashionable apparel, as she happened, fortunately for the employment of her mind, to have brought with her to the cottage.

Harriet, on the contrary, was absorbed in her new and interesting pursuits, and with all her wonted ardour of mind, unwearied assiduity, holy exertion, and undeviating alacrity, was constantly employed in the study of the Scriptures—in the steady pursuit of the treasures of divine truth—in the unceasing search after the knowledge of the adorable Redeemer, the excellencies of his character, and the glories of his cross—and in the devout and adoring contemplation of the exalted majesty, infinite purity, and transcendent holiness of God.

The things which had formerly shared so large a portion of her time, and which had maintained so powerful a sway over her heart, now scarcely possessed importance enough to elicit a passing remark, or sufficient attraction

to engage a momentary thought; unless indeed it were, the sigh of regret over the follies of her former life, when such things had been the object of her supreme delight; or over her sister's sad decline, when such things seemed again to constitute the chief sources of her happiness.

She saw and she deplored the strong hold which the world appeared to maintain over the mind of Eleanor, and its subtle though imperceptible influence in leading her thoughts away from her best—her eternal interests, to the gay and glittering prospects which she had in view.

In truth, the heart of Eleanor was divided between God and the world; and while she did not deny the vast importance of obtaining an interest in His salvation—an entrance into His heavenly kingdom, and a participation in the life and glory of the inheritance above—she was also absorbed in the thoughts of her future earthly grandeur; mingling, unconsciously perhaps, the high and hallowed hopes of heaven, with the flattering promise of terrene felicity, which she hoped ere long to enjoy.

A religion which could have closely connect-

ed piety with earthly pleasure—which could have complacently smiled at the reign of God in the heart at one time, and the reign of the world at another—which could have allowed the shadow of a throne to be set up for Him, who demands the whole heart and the whole allegiance—which could have suffered a rival in the love, honour, and worship, undividedly due to God—a religion such as this would have suited well, the depraved taste, and worldly inclinations of Eleanor.

Harriet had thus a clear, but an affecting view of the evil nature of sin—of the powerful influence of the world, and the melancholy tendency of the human heart to depart from the living God, and from the pure and lovely spirit of the Gospel.

And the example of this in one so ardently beloved as her sister, touched her in the tenderest point, filled her heart with the deepest sorrow, and taught her the painful but salutary lesson, of parting with every thing for the pearl of great price ; and the necessity of the holy, the righteous, and immutable barrier, which God has placed between attachment to himself and attachment to the world.

She saw that a union between them could

never be formed ; that their opposite interests could never be reconciled ; that a great and marked distinction always existed between them ; that God, along with the sovereign control which he exercised over the life, possessed a divine—a creating, and a redeeming right to the supreme place in the heart and affections.

How then could she, or any one, yield only a *part* of what was *wholly* his own, to her kind and gracious Father in heaven, who had formed her by his power—upheld her by his providence, and redeemed her by his mercy and his boundless goodness ? The very idea caused her exquisite pain, and excited a thousand sorrows and apprehensions in her soul, until then unknown, because unexperienced.

She had now a constant dread of the world that was so opposed to God ; that presented obstacles so powerful to her celestial progress ; and that so sadly enchained the soaring spirit to the sordid earth. She had now a constant dread, too, of her own heart. How could she trust it, so deceitful, and so wicked ? How could she sustain the assaults of the world, so alluring and so powerful ? Ah ! would she not sink in the conflict—dishonour the cause—re-

nounce the faith—lose her soul, and perish in her sin ?

She trembled at the thought. She wished that she could live for ever in the depths of retirement—bury herself in the recesses of some secluded woodland scene, far from the baneful power of the subtle and encroaching enemy, until at length, her new and valued principles of religion, would be rivetted on her soul, in deep, and permanent, and ever-increasing influence.

But oh ! how widely different was her destiny ! Almost unconsciously she breathed a sorrowful regret that she had ever joined with her sister in applying to their uncle ; or wished at least that he had dispensed his goodness to them in any other way, than by inviting them out to India, where she had every reason to believe they would once more be immersed in the gaieties of life, and be obliged, from their very position in society, to mingle with the world, and to comply with many things, which her conscience now whispered to be inconsistent with duty.

For, had not the mere prospect of these gaieties and pleasures, already detached her sister's mind from her sacred pursuits ? And might

not their actual enjoyment be productive of still more disastrous consequences—not only to Eleanor, but perhaps to herself?

It was certainly less difficult besides, to withstand temptations at a distance than to meet them in their full blaze of splendour, and unmitigated power of fascination.

And had not poor Eleanor been as much aroused to her spiritual welfare as she had been? Her impressions had been as deep—her anxieties as great—her hopes, and fears, and joys as full; her early blossoms as beautiful, and as rich in promise as her own. Her whole soul had seemed to be subdued, and softened in the powerful reception of the gift of grace—to be melted, and moulded into the very image of the gospel of Christ. And yet, alas! she had deeply—sadly fallen!

And who could tell, but that she also, though at present she appeared to have built her house upon a rock, might be swept away from her holy profession, by the first fierce blast of an opposing storm!

Might not she also be alienated from God—enslaved by sin, or captivated by the world? and, in the midst of wealth, and the charms of splendour, and the seductions of unhallowed

pleasure, lose her relish for the things of God ?

Was her purpose firmer, or her strength greater, or her faith stronger, than those of her sister seemed at first to be ? Was her corruption weaker, or her heart better, or more steel-ed to things of earth, or more attached to things of heaven ? Ah ! no : the hearts of both were by nature the same ; their thoughts—their feelings, and desires alike. And though her own impressions were at present deep—might they not decline ? Might not sin again prevail over her ? Might she not fall before the first attack of temptation ? She had just put on the harness. She had not yet been tried. She had not yet been brought to the battle-field. When called perhaps to mingle with the sons and daughters of gaiety, her feeble resolutions might fail, and the thoughts and feelings which had possessed such a powerful hold of her heart by nature, might haply burst forth again from beneath their slender envelopement, and she would join once more in the mirthful throng, and forget, in the maze of the giddy dance, all that she had experienced of purer joys, and happier hopes, and more lasting delights—Oh ! this was a sad and a bitter thought !

Harriet was thus led, in a remarkable yet perfectly natural way, to experience a total change of mind, relative to the circumstances in which she and her sister were placed, and she began deeply to regret the necessity they were under, of setting out for India, both because of the dangers to be encountered there, and the blessings to be renounced at home.

She had recently had some interesting conversations with her enlightened friend, the clergyman, on the subject of the peculiar religious advantages which her native country enjoyed, and she now trembled at the thought of being again plunged into the vortex of fashion, and of losing the spiritual privileges, which she now enjoyed so richly, and valued so highly.

In her own country, she was blessed with the pure preaching of the word of God—with the holy fellowship of the gospel of Christ—with the sweet intercourse of the saints of Jesus, and with the faithful administration of the ordinances of grace.

But could such privileges—such blessings—she asked herself—be enjoyed in India—in that land which she had chosen to be her future home ?

Ah ! no ; with all its wealth and natural advantages, it was but a moral waste—a howling wilderness—the seat of spiritual darkness and desolation—a dry and thirsty land, where no water is—where the sweet streams of the water of life are not enjoyed—where the Sun of Righteousness arises not, with healing in his wings.

Oh ! with what ardour of attachment did her mind now turn to her native land, where such blessings were so rich and abundant. Strange revolution of thought and feeling ! But it was even so. With all its wilds—its mountains—its glens, and its cloudy skies—once so slighted and despised—Scotland was now to her an honoured—a beloved, and a happy spot.

All its advantages and excellencies, till now unheeded, arose to her view, and were cherished the more fondly, because so soon to be relinquished.

It was the land of her birth—the land of her fathers—the land of the mountain and flood. A land of bright genius, talent, and worth ; distinguished by the education, intelligence, and industry of her people—by the valour of her warriors—by the learning of her

philosophers ; but distinguished above all, by the high tone of her moral worth—by her calm, deep, enlightened, unobtrusive religion. Yes ; —amid all her claims to honourable pre-eminence, her RELIGION was the brightest gem that sparkled in her diadem.

How—thought Harriet—could she forget—could she now part from that beloved land ? And with a feeling of affectionate attachment towards her natal soil, which she had never experienced before, and which was almost inexplicable to herself, did she remember the calm seclusion of its holy Sabbaths—the purity and simplicity of its holy worship, and the spirit of love and liberty which pervaded the whole. And then she would recur in her own mind to those days of misery and bloodshed, of which perhaps she had formerly read with such indifference—when martyrs suffered in the cause of their country and their God ;—and bring up before her fancy's view the sacred solitude of the glens and mountains, which had been hallowed by the holy footsteps—by the devout and fervent worship—by the ashes and the blood of the persecuted sons of Zion ; and she would heave a sigh, or drop a tear over the recollection of the sufferings and the sorrows of

the holiest of men, scorned, perhaps, by many a degenerate son, or made the butt of the witling's merry quip or tale—but of whom the world was not worthy—whose memories shall be embalmed in the hearts of generations yet unborn.

“ With all their failings and their faults—for still they were mortal men—Oh ! when”—would our young friend, with a glowing heart, exclaim—“ Oh ! when shall so bright a vision light upon the earth again ? Oh ! happy land ! though thou hast not the riches and the beautiful scenery of the favoured realms of the sun, yet art thou wealthier far—not in silver, and gold, and gems, but in the precious dust of the saints, mingling with thy soil—in the hallowed remembrance of their righteous deeds, existing in thy unequalled privileges and blessings !”

Thus Harriet compared the loss to be sustained, with the gain to be acquired. She weighed the certain disadvantages against the uncertain advantages connected with her visit to India. And after having considered much the all-absorbing question—after having endeavoured to bring every faculty of her mind to bear upon the subject, and after having humbly sought guidance from her heavenly Father—she ultimately came to the convic-

tion, that there was an obvious propriety—yea, an absolute necessity for respectfully declining her uncle's invitation.

And yet she was grieved, when she reflected on her uncle's kindness, and the pain and disappointment which her refusal might possibly occasion. What would he think of her conduct now, if the aid which had been so anxiously solicited, and so generously granted, should after all, be apparently so scornfully rejected? Could she expect his approval of the step she had taken? Could she even expect his forgiveness? Or could she hope for his assistance if required at some future period?

But there was still another difficulty, even more formidable than this,—would Eleanor agree to such a thing? Would she consent to remain in comparative obscurity at home, when her whole soul seemed to be wrapt up in the hopes of a life of Eastern splendour? Would she ever be brought to relinquish this darling object? Would the reasons which pressed so powerfully on her own mind, have equal weight on the mind of her sister? How could she expect it? Had she not already seen the powerful influence which the world maintained over her?

And how could she ever bring herself to separate from that dear, though erring sister, and allow her to traverse the stormy ocean alone, and proceed to the distant shore of benighted India, in search of deceitful happiness ; where all her religious principles might be lost amid the allurements of her situation, and where, like her beloved and lamented father, she might meet perhaps with an early grave, and her ashes mingle with the soil of a strange and far distant land ?

Ah ! here was the barbed arrow which pierced the heart of Harriet with the most poignant sorrow !

But yet—she still argued—with all these painful consequences—though her bosom should be wounded, and her heart torn, ought she for these to endanger the salvation of her own immortal soul ? Most surely not. And if Eleanor and Miss Melville should persist in following out their worldly designs—ought she to comply, and accompany them to India ?

The question, in all its delicate bearings and connections, excited a thousand such painful feelings, and conflicting thoughts in Harriet's mind, and aroused so stormy a conflict between the appeal of conscience and affec-

tion for her sister, that it was long before she could view it dispassionately, and arrive at the sad, but decided determination of remaining in her own country.

And in coming at length to this ultimate, though hardly contested conclusion, she experienced so holy and calm a satisfaction of mind—so sweet a tranquillity—so happy a consciousness that this was the path marked out for her by her heavenly Father—as made ample amends for the violence of the preceding struggle which had agitated her breast.

And although the probable approaching separation from her sister still filled her heart with the deepest sorrow, it was now mingled with a holy resignation to the will of God, and a consoling confidence in his ever-watchful Providence—that wonderfully served to chasten its bitterness, and to remove from her mind the deep distress which she had at first experienced.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Dans la religion, tout ce qui ne sert point à la vie spirituelle, ne vaut rien et doit être rejeté.”

Miss Melville at length returned, after a long absence, and did not fail to notice, almost immediately, the change which had passed upon her young charge since she had left them.

Eleanor was serious, but she seemed restless and unhappy. The change on Harriet was more decisive and remarkable. A visible alteration was perceptible in her whole demeanour. She appeared deeply thoughtful—a sombre shade seemed to rest on her mind, as if it had been lately the scene of some mental conflict—and yet she was serene and happy. Her manner also was gentler, though more reserved, whilst her conversation had lost much of its *brusque* and airy character, being more frequently directed to subjects of grave and serious import.

Accustomed, however, as Miss Melville had been, to the various romantic and imaginative sallies of Harriet's mind, this change, although it caused remark, excited no alarm; and amid the hurry and the bustle connected with their intended departure, she soon lost sight of the unusual gravity and unwonted sedateness of her sprightly favourite, and directed, for the moment, her care and attention to matters of greater importance.

And now all preparation was once more completed, and only a few weeks more must intervene before they should finally depart for India—when Harriet, finding that her hints on the subject nearest her heart were not understood, or at least misconstrued, at length took courage, and explicitly declared^{*} her decided determination not to go abroad.

To describe the expressive looks of her sister, and Miss Melville, at this moment, would perhaps be impossible. Both heard this strange announcement with unutterable astonishment. They looked confounded—lost in amazement. They seemed to doubt the evidence of their own senses. Their utterance appeared to be suspended, by the suddenness of the surprise, and a solemn pause occurred for a few moments

—moments of breathless suspense, and deep agitation. At length, both exclaimed as with one voice,—“ Harriet!—Harriet!—what do you mean?”

Harriet was calm and collected. With mildness and modesty, but with much firmness, she repeated what she had said, whilst the others reiterated their exclamations of astonishment and alarm, impatiently demanding an explanation of the matter.

“ Ah! I can scarcely express, and you cannot conceive how deeply it grieves me thus to distress you”—she said, in reply, with considerable feeling—“ but when I shall have explained my reasons for such a determination

“ But, Harriet,” interrupted her sister, looking her anxiously in the face, and forcing a faint smile, “ you are not in earnest in what you say! It cannot be. It is but a joke—you are only jesting! Is it not so, dearest?”

“ No, indeed, dear Eleanor, I am not jesting—I never was so serious in my life, as when I now tell you again, that I cannot go to India.——And if you will only listen to me for a moment,” she added, entreatingly, observing the angry gloom that thickened on

Miss Melville's brow, and anxious to avert the storm it portended—"if you will only listen to me for a moment, I will state to you my reasons ———."

Her gentle and deprecating appeal, however, was in vain.

"Reasons!" exclaimed Miss Melville, in a tone of deep displeasure, "what reasons can you possibly produce to convince us that you are right, where you are so evidently wrong? What mighty influence can such reasons possess to sway our minds—to control our destinies—to turn us from our purpose, and annihilate at once all the hopes, which we have so justly formed, and so fondly cherished? Who can hear reasons on such a subject as this? Not I—truly; I will have none of your reasons."

"Stop! dear Miss Melville," said Eleanor, gently interposing; "you must not be so severe. Though I am persuaded that no reason in the world can justify Harriet in forming such a resolution, yet, I think, we cannot be very far wrong in listening to all that she has to say upon the subject. We ought not in justice to refuse to hear her reasons—we ought not in candour to condemn her un-

heard, however blamable her determination may be."

An affectionate look from Harriet spoke her gratitude for this kind interposition in her behalf. But with Miss Melville the effect was only to increase her anger, because, perhaps, she felt herself laid under the necessity of no longer refusing her assent.

"Reasons!" she exclaimed again, turning with a careless and a scornful smile from Harriet to her sister, "Oh! let us have them, then. Mighty reasons surely; the dictates of consummate wisdom, no doubt!—eh! Eleanor?"

"You are harsh, Miss Melville," Harriet replied, with considerable emotion; "I did not expect unkindness from you, far less, severity. But let it pass—you shall hear my reasons—they are few and simple, though, as you shall see, very powerful: such they seem to me at least, and it is under their influence alone that I am acting thus. But though I may state them, I cannot—I confess—impart to your mind the deep and powerful impression which their value and importance so justly demand, and are so well fitted to produce. That belongs to God alone. Yet, listen to me; Miss

Melville," she said, in a firm, deliberate and solemn tone ; " I fear God—I love and reverence his holy name—I tremble at the thought of dishonouring, or offending Him—I dread the potent allurements of a wicked world—I fear the overwhelming influence of the pleasures of sin—of the deep deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart ; I know my own heart to be exceedingly sinful, and to be inclined—yea—strongly inclined to love the world—its riches, splendours, pleasures, and amusements ; and to the unhallowed influence of all these, as you are aware, I must necessarily be exposed in India. I cannot therefore—I dare not think of subjecting myself to so hazardous a temptation. For how could I hope to pass through the ordeal untouched, or uninfluenced by the fascinations of the scenes, in which I have too long found my chief delight ? How could—I ask you—how could I risk the salvation of my soul for such trifles as these ? ' What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? '

" What cant ! " said Miss Melville, lifting up her hands and her eyes in the most pro-

found astonishment, "What fanatical delusion! I tell you, Harriet, I abhor such enthusiasm—It has ever been the object of my perfect scorn. I have hitherto watched over you with maternal solicitude, to guard you against such dangerous sentiments, and I now behold, with bitterness of soul, the frustration of all my hopes—of all my toils, at one fell swoop. Oh! that such a calamity should occur to us!"

As she spoke thus, her whole frame trembled with agitation, in troubled forethought of what appeared to her, the worst stage of human delusion and degradation.

"I am grieved, Miss Melville"—returned Harriet—"but not surprised, to hear the sentiments which you have now expressed. I have learned enough of the depravity of our nature to know, that the cause of religion, and the glorious gospel, are ever exposed to the deep hostility of the human heart. I have found it so in my own experience."

"And is such the course," she continued, after a short pause, "which concern for my felicity would encourage me to prosecute? Would you have me to relinquish that religion, which only can give peace whilst we

live—comfort when we come to die, and after death a happiness, boundless as our wishes, and lasting as the duration of eternity? Must I renounce hopes, and enjoyments so exalted and blessed as these? Must I renounce the Saviour, and part with every thing which that sweet name contains? And for what? To plunge once more into the gaieties of the world—to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season—to be attended with the pomp and splendour of outward happiness and prosperity, whilst within the heart may be unsatisfied, restless, and miserable! Never—Miss Melville—never,” she energetically repeated, “I will never part with every thing on earth, than part with my beloved Lord. I have tasted the sweetness—the blessedness of fellowship with him, and now acknowledge that there is no happiness equal to that of loving and serving him. The peace that passeth all understanding, and the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory—such are the blessings which I now experience and desire. Come then”—she added with ineffable feeling—“joy or sorrow—life or death—or come what may—any thing—every thing—all shall be welcome rather than renounce the Divine Redeemer—yea,

doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. He is the treasure—the pearl of great price—the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. - And now, Miss Melville, I am prepared for your displeasure, and will submit without a murmur to all the unkindness which you choose to heap upon me. This only will I do—scorn heaped upon Christ, or his sacred cause, shall be met and repelled by equal scorn of the pleasures of a worthless world. God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

“What consummate pride !” exclaimed Miss Melville, after having listened to Harriet in attentive, but contemptuous silence, “what a mighty boast ! What a magnanimous resolution !—But what dreadful delusion ! what deep hypocrisy ! Have I not invariably found that those who talk the most, and make the loudest noise about religion, are the greatest dissemblers or self-deceivers ? Oh ! I scorn such proud boasters, who are so much purer and holier than their neighbours !”

“I am not boasting, Miss Melville,” said

Harriet, in a half-sorrowful, half-indignant tone, "I have no ground for glorying—Ah! far from it. I am only expressing the determined attachment of my soul to the sacred cause which you now vilify. This you may call hypocrisy—but it is not hypocrisy. I am assuming no cloak of religion in order to attain some selfish end, or advance some earthly project—but, on the contrary, must necessarily make a complete sacrifice of all my worldly interests. Believe me," she said earnestly, "I speak the words of truth and deep sincerity. Religion consists not in an empty profession, but it adorns a profession by a holy life: and what if there should be some, Miss Melville, as you say, who put on the garb of religion, and steal like the wily serpent, into the paradise of God, shewing their beauty, but concealing their sting—can the conduct of a few, form the character of the whole? Can the deeds of one, who is void of probity, constitute the whole community dishonest men? Can a few base counterfeits prove that there is no genuine coin? Oh! surely not. It proves, in fact, the very reverse. If there were ~~no~~ genuine coin, there would be no base counterfeits—if there were no real religion, there would be

no hypocrisy. Judge not therefore religion thus! for the evil of which you complain, is in truth a testimony to the excellency of Christianity—the very garb is so honourable, that it is assumed even by its enemies. ——— But I tire your patience,” she added gently, observing that Miss Melville was now evincing extreme impatience. “I have merely reasoned thus far, to clear myself from the imputations which you cast upon me.”

“Admirable reasoning indeed!” exclaimed Miss Melville, in anger and in scorn, “quite unanswerable, I deem!”

“Dear Miss Melville, be calm,” said Eleanor, who hitherto had sustained only a very partial share in the conversation; “there is no occasion for reasoning or disputing on either side. Trust me, Harriet is not so utterly lost to us—to herself, as to follow out finally her ridiculous plan. For how, Harriet,” she said, addressing her sister, “could you, in the name of all that is proper, or prudent, remain in your own country, alone and unprotected? You cannot expect that either Miss Melville, or I, will sacrifice our prospects for a silly whim of yours,—and how you could manage to live by yourself, I cannot comprehend. Think of this,

dear Harriet—come, you will yet be reasonable.”

“Eleanor,” said her sister earnestly, “do not seek to dissuade me from my purpose. There may be many difficulties connected with my solitary sojourn in my native land, but they seem nothing in comparison with the danger which my foreboding fears can easily, without prophetic vision, discern, gathering thickly in the East. The path behind may be rugged and painful—but the path before, leads—methinks—to the verge of a dreadful precipice. Now, shall I close my eyes—press blindly onwards till I reach the fatal summit, and then stumble, and fall, and perish in the gulf below? Eleanor, you once beheld the danger too,—your heart responded to the heavenly call—your bosom thrilled with deep and powerful feeling. Are all your fears and emotions gone? Ah! think,” she said impressively, “how many a sorrowing heart—how many a weeping eye—how many an opening grave, may still be seen beneath that bright and sunny sky! And who can tell but that you are journeying to that far distant land only to form for yourself an early tomb, and lay yourself down beside the ashes of our lamented

father?—No! Eleanor, do not urge me further; believe me, it is vain. My purpose has been formed, beneath the pressure of too much sorrow for the separation, which, in all likelihood, it will occasion between us, and under too deep a conviction of its necessity, to admit of change now. Yet think of what I have said

“Necessity!” interrupted Miss Melville, in a burst of passion; “silly—foolish—perverse girl! What necessity ought to weigh with you but the consideration of your friendless and pennyless condition? Have you thought of that at all, Miss Harriet, in your disinterested sacrifice for conscience’ sake? Come now, make your choice, and pay for your folly.”

“With all my heart,” was the firm but modest reply, “I am willing to do so. I have counted the cost—I have weighed every thing. I am ready to make the surrender which my Saviour demands. I am satisfied to abide by the consequences of my choice. The wonder-working Providence which has hitherto so graciously guarded my steps, will not, I am persuaded, abandon me now. And although his dispensations may be dark and mysterious, yet mercy is mingled with the darkest of his ways, and

rays of heavenly glory often beam through the thickest cloud, imparting to the soul such discoveries of that world of life and light, as make the brightest and the richest scene of earth, but dark and poor indeed !”

“ As for that world,” replied Miss Melville, with a sneer, “ I think that I know just as much about it as any do who were never there.”

“ Ah ! never there, indeed, Miss Melville,” said Harriet, “ but you will not deny that *there* we must be—in weal or in woe—happen what may. It is vain, then, to shift the subject, or conceal it from our view. Is it not the highest folly to expend all our energies on the present vain and transitory scene, and never think of our everlasting interests till we are called to pass into an eternal world ? Now, here is the lofty eminence sustained by the Christian. He takes his stand by the brink of the grave, and there he surveys both worlds—earth and heaven—time and eternity—the trifles and the shadows of the one—and the vast realities and solemnities of the other—the darkness and the desolation of the nether scene—and the ineffable splendours and enjoyments of the upper.—Oh ! *then*, how light and vain

seems every sublunary thing when weighed against eternity !”

“ All that may be true,” said Elcanor, who during the whole of the conversation had evinced much deep attention, though her countenance was marked by an extremely anxious and uneasy expression ; “ we do not dispute it—we are perfectly willing to allow the vast importance of every thing relative to religion ; —but it is your foolish and ridiculous scheme which calls for our decided disapprobation. Think, Harriet—think of the consequences likely to result from such a step !”

“ My dear sister,” replied Harriet emphatically, “ I have already told you that I am prepared for the consequences—be what they may. But I have no wish to involve you in any of these consequences—think not of me, then, in forming your plans. Let neither my wishes nor my welfare—whatever in God’s adorable providence may hereafter be my lot—influence your mind in the choice which you make. If you are determined to go abroad—I shall be the last person in the world to urge you, for my sake, to remain at home. If you are not moved by a higher influence or authority than mine—if you are not swayed by a re-

ward for the glory of God, and concern for your own eternal interests—then go to India, and be as happy as wealth, and splendour, and all the enjoyments of earth can make you—happen what may to me. But, look well, I entreat you, to the course which you purpose to follow—consider that, perhaps, you are laying up a bitter store of sorrow and of self-reproach for after life. Ah!” she continued, in a disturbed voice, “I once thought that my dearest sister would view this matter in the same serious light as I do. Then—then, indeed, there should have been no separation between us. But, alas! ———” Here her feelings overpowered her, and she burst into tears.

“Dearest Harriet,” said her sister, taking her hand, and pressing it affectionately in hers; “why is it that we should ever be separated? Surely religion does not demand such a sacrifice as this! Must we renounce all the innocent enjoyments of life—yea, all that is near and dear to us upon earth? No such thing;—this would be a gloomy system indeed! Harriet, you are wrong—you are deluding yourself—you have allowed your mind to dwell upon points of high requirement, which nowhere exist but in your own imagination, till

at length you have arrived at the fanciful idea, of attaining, in yourself, such a measure of excellence, as cannot be found, save in the gloomy vision of the narrow-minded bigot, or the wild dream of the mad enthusiast. Now this," she continued, in a chiding tone, "as I augured, is nothing but the consequence of your late intense application to the study of religion, which has led your naturally warm mind beyond the limits of sober inquiry and rational duty, into the mazes of enthusiasm and error. Believe me, that religion may dwell in the lordly palace, as well as in the lowly cabin—that the high-born peer may be as distinguished for piety, as the humble peasant; and that, moreover, his riches and his elevated rank afford him vast advantages, and innumerable opportunities of diffusive benevolence, which the pious poor, however excellent their character, can never possess. Besides," she added, "it is utterly impossible for any one to arrive at that height of holiness and perfection mentioned in the Bible;—nor is it expected. Is not the inability of man to attain that transcendant degree of excellence required by God constantly pressed upon the attention? Yes—my dear Harriet—a few days' unbiased

consideration of these things, will render you more candid, and open to conviction, and will shew you the strange delusion into which you have fallen."

"My dear Eleanor," replied her sister calmly, "do not urge me farther. It is impossible that I can now think as you do. No—I must not be persuaded in a matter so immensely important as this. Ah! you do not know what it has cost me to come to this decision, and I cannot—nay, I dare not give it up. But, my dearest Eleanor,"—addressing her sister with much earnestness,—“would you really wish to persuade me that a *little* religion—yea, a *very little* is quite sufficient, and that high attainment in holiness, or heavenly excellence, is not required—not to be expected—not to be desired,—yea, that it is even dangerous and delusive? Can such be your sentiments? My dear sister, I would just reverse the principle, and say, as the poet says of learning—‘A little religion is a dangerous thing—drink deep, or taste not of the heavenly stream.’ It is the deep draught—the full measure—the enlarged experience, and the exalted piety, flowing from the influence of real religion, that fill the soul with an unspeak-

able—nay, a glorified joy ! And what is the height of this holy requirement ? Hear it, Eleanor ;—‘ Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.’ ‘ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, and thy neighbour as thyself.’ ‘ He that loveth father or mother more than me,’ said our blessed Lord, ‘ is not worthy of me : and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me : and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.’ ‘ If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee : it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire.’ Now,” continued Harriet, an expression of elevated animation overspreading her young countenance, “ when I have demands so exalted as these, delivered and enforced by such high authority, can I listen, for a moment, to the dangerous insinuation, that although God demands very much, he is satisfied with very little ? On the contrary, does He not emphatically say, ‘ I would thou wert cold or hot.’ ‘ How long halt ye between two opinions ?’ ‘ Ye cannot serve God and mammon.’ And is it so ?”—she

said, suddenly raising her eyes to heaven, and involuntarily speaking with the most devout fervency of expression ;—"and is it so ? —oh ! thou glorious One—my Lord—my love—my inspiration, and my all !—my joy in sorrow—light in darkness, and my life in death ! my refuge and my strength !—my God—my shield—my Saviour, and my hiding-place. And is it so—thou great and glorious Redeemer !—thou blessed Jesus, whom the saints worship, and the seraphim adore !—that I—whom thou dost love, and hast loved with an everlasting love—am in danger of serving thee too much—fearing thee too fervently—loving thee too ardently—resembling thee too closely ? Ah ! never !—on such a theme as this 'tis impious to be calm ; passion, is reason—transport, temper here !"

There was an energy and eloquence in Harriet's language, and an air of combined dignity and devotion in her manner, as she uttered this, that for a few moments appeared to silence, if not convince her auditors. Eleanor, in particular, looked awe-struck and bewildered. Miss Melville, however, quickly recovered herself.

" Harriet !—Harriet !" she exclaimed, in a

tone which betokened that she was either considerably softened, or too seriously alarmed, to be so violent in her expressions of displeasure ; “ my child ! my poor child !—my only fear now is, that you are beside yourself.” And in saying this, she looked at the object of her address, with so keen, anxious, and penetrating a gaze, that fully evinced the reality of the doubt which she now expressed. But the high and open brow—and the intelligence of her clear blue eye—and the animated glow which still beamed on her countenance, as Harriet sustained her scrutinizing glance, quickly repelled the insidious suspicion.

Miss Melville, therefore, perplexed and chagrined, remained silent ; and as Eleanor appeared too much out of spirits, and Harriet too seriously impressed with her own remarks, to continue the conversation, it ended for the present.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ ————— I cannot go
Where piety nor peace e’er smile around.”

THE next day the same subject was resumed with apparently increased determination, on the part of Miss Melville, to endeavour to overcome the strange, and, in her eyes, delusive notions which Harriet had imbibed.

But she now adopted milder and more persuasive arguments for accomplishing her purpose, than she had employed the day before.

“ I have been thinking much,” she began, in an agreeable and gentle tone, immediately after their morning repast was concluded, and the simple breakfast equipage removed ; “ I have been thinking much, my dear Harriet, of all that passed between us yesterday, and am, indeed, more and more convinced of the absurdity and madness of your plan. For, in

the first place, if you are determined to persist in your wild scheme—how are *we* to act? *My* prospects are not the weight of a feather in the balance. But must your sister's fortune suffer—nay, be altogether sacrificed for so foolish a scruple as this? Surely not; nor can I allow her to proceed alone to India. And you, Harriet—how are you to live?—where?—with whom? A young girl in the midst of the world, without a guide, a guardian, or a friend! I tremble to think of it. And what, my dearest child," she continued affectionately, "what are we to do without you, who have ever been the life and joy of our happy little family circle? How can we enjoy our prosperity alone—unshared by you? Separation from you, and the painful thought of your friendless condition, would poison and destroy all our happiness! Besides, what would your uncle say? Will not your conduct appear a perfect insult to his goodness?—marked with the wildest extravagance and the grossest ingratitude?—first to entreat his kindness, and then in the very next breath to fling it from you! Oh!" she said, with involuntary bitterness, "is there such another fool in the world, that would thus relinquish

comfort and opulence for a ridiculous scruple—yea, perfect obstinacy? I know not what to think or say—I am bewildered—stupified at such absolute folly! What a calamity!—what a calamity!” she repeated, wringing her hands and looking so distressed, that Harriet could scarcely refrain from bursting into tears.

“My dear Miss Melville,” she said in a voice trembling with emotion, “I am truly sensible of all your kindness. I am sincerely convinced of your deep interest in my welfare—I am much grieved in doing any thing to distress you. Oh! that you only felt the weight of the reasons which influence my conduct; you would then be convinced that I am acting neither rashly nor foolishly. I grieve to appear obstinate; but even at the risk of your deep displeasure,”—and here the calmness and the decision which she had formerly evinced, appeared to be restored to her—“even at the risk of parting from those nearest and dearest to me on earth, I cannot renounce the resolution which I have formed. Every thing you have mentioned, I have already maturely weighed—what my uncle may think, I do not pretend to say. I can scarce-

ly hope, however, that he will approve of my declining to accept his kind invitation; far less can I hope that he will approve of the reasons which have led to this result. But what of that?" she continued, speaking with great earnestness and decision of manner, "my dear Miss Melville—my dearest sister, listen to me. A life of full conformity to the world, in all its gaiety, folly, and vanity, is the path you wish me to pursue. To adopt such a course, I know and feel, would endanger my soul. To refuse entering upon it, might mar my worldly prospects, and offend my uncle. Now, which shall I choose? My answer is ready—whatever you may think of it, I must obey God, rather than man—I must please him, though I should offend my dearest friend. I reflect with gratitude on my uncle's generous conduct, and should be deeply grieved to appear to him either unthankful or capricious; but the glory of God, and the salvation of the soul, are subjects paramount to every thing else."

"My dearest girl," said Miss Melville soothingly, "no one disputes it. But what on earth are you contending for? Surely such things can be attended to in India as well as at home.

Every arrangement will be made for your entire liberty of conscience,"—she smiled somewhat scornfully as she spoke; but the next moment quickly suppressed it,—“you will not be required to participate in any gaiety, or any amusement of which you do not perfectly approve. Be assured, my love, your uncle will have too much regard for your feelings, and too deep an interest in your happiness, to urge any course contrary to your inclinations.”

“No, Miss Melville,” replied Harriet calmly, “though I were to go to India—that would not remove the difficulty. My uncle would not approve of my principles; and how could I conform to his wishes, or the plans he has formed? To refuse to comply in his very presence, and in the face—it may be—of his express command, after he has done so much, and is ready still to do so much more, would rouse his indignation to an incurable resentment.—And what then? Who knows but that he might withhold his favours—we have known his obduracy of old—and what then would be my situation, in a strange land—at such a distance—without a friend—without a home,—absent, too, from all the ordinances of

the gospel which I value so highly, though others may esteem them lightly?"

"Stop!—stop! my love," interrupted Miss Melville, "that will never be; you are just depicting what will be your situation at home—not in India."

"No, indeed, my dear Miss Melville," replied Harriet, with more cheerfulness than she had yet displayed, "I do not suppose that my condition at home will be a state of utter destitution. I shall be content with little.—I shall have enough to feed and clothe me; and besides, I have been blessed with a liberal education, which, even of itself, would place me above indigence. But, more than all, I have the care and superintendence of a kind heavenly Father, whose providence will never cease to watch over me,—and with this, have I not every reason to be satisfied?"

"Providence!" exclaimed Eleanor, with warmth, "are you not at this moment scornfully rejecting the proffered bounties of Heaven?"

"No, my dear Eleanor, what ——"

"Yes, indeed," interrupted Miss Melville; "this is my opinion too. In the whole of this matter, there has been a very wonderful in-

terposition of the Providence of God in our behalf."

"Wonderful indeed!" exclaimed Harriet emphatically, but at the same time sighing deeply, and again unconsciously speaking in a tone of voice full of feeling and sadness: "And who can have greater cause of astonishment than I? Was it not that wonderful Providence which guided my soul to the blessed Saviour? Can I ever forget that our intended voyage to India, was the means of leading my footsteps to the means of salvation? But now that adorable Providence has taught me, that there are dangers connected with the path before me, which it is my highest duty to shun. And shall I refuse to listen to that still small voice of conscience? No,—I give up my brilliant worldly prospects, without one sigh of regret—without one feeling of pain. Riches and honour are often a snare—yea, sometimes a curse to the man who possesses them: 'They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.'"

"Plausible sophistry, truly!" exclaimed Miss Melville, completely losing her self-com-

mand, and again waxing exceedingly hot : “ So, Miss Harriet, when your sister and I go out to India, every thing there is intended as a snare and a curse for us—the wicked ! A most charitable conclusion ! How highly it honours you ! What delicate feeling ! What exalted affection ! Candour—love—liberality—every thing here ! ”

“ No—no,” repeated Harriet, earnestly ; “ I meant no such thing !—I spoke of myself—of my own danger. It would ill, indeed, become me to sit in judgment upon others. But if the path be dangerous to me,” she instantly added, still anxious to make some salutary impression on the minds of her companions, “ be assured, it is no less dangerous to you. I only wish you to reflect—Oh ! that you would ——.”

“ Say no more—say no more,” said Miss Melville, angrily and impatiently. “ It is absolutely sickening. Ah ! Eleanor ! ” turning with a half-sorrowful, half-indignant countenance to her more compliant charge, “ who would ever have thought of this ?—who would ever have dreamed of such consummate folly ? But you, happily, are in your right senses. Come, let us leave this stubborn girl to her

own gratifying meditations. Her heart will yet reproach her bitterly for thus forsaking her best friends.—Come, my dear Eleanor, let us go.”

Harriet looked earnestly after them as they retired ; and anxious solicitude on their account, as well as deep sorrow for the separation, which so soon was to take place between them, depressed her heart, and saddened her spirit. Deep sighs burst from her agitated bosom, and tears stole rapidly down her cheek, as she knelt down, and poured forth to Heaven the fervent supplications of her soul.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Think not that I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.”

It would be tedious, as it is unnecessary, to relate minutely all the subsequent conversations on the interesting theme, that had formed the subject of the recent discussion.

Suffice it to say, that Harriet continued firmly to adhere to the resolution which she had formed, and that neither threats nor commands—entreaties, nor expostulations, were of any avail in inducing her to change her purpose, or abandon her principles.

The various reasons on which her important decision had been formed, were more deeply impressed upon her mind, and acquired greater strength and cogency, from her fre-

quent discussions with Miss Melville and her sister ; and she had now a facility in reasoning on the subject which she did not possess so fully before.

Her motives, indeed, evinced such sincerity, and her whole conduct was so amiable—so dignified—so disinterested, and so full of self-denial, that none but a partial eye could fail to discern, and duly appreciate, the high rectitude, and holy principle by which she was actuated.

But though she refused to accede to the wishes of her friends, there was nothing, either in her language or demeanour, calculated to embitter their feelings, or increase their disappointment. She stood firmly indeed upon her high vantage ground, without compromising her principles ; but, at the same time, without assuming any superiority, or evincing any thing approaching to hauteur. And although she was sometimes, when necessity required, led into argument, yet her language was always so kind, and her spirit so gentle—breathing such affection, and glowing with such tenderness, that even her opponents were constrained to marvel at her meekness.

But the sweet stream of mutual kindness

was ever and anon checked, in its gentle flow, by the rude obstructions encountered in its progress. The meekness of Harriet was not received with equal meekness. Her gentleness and love were sometimes repelled with bitterness and scorn. The soft breathings of her calm spirit, sometimes fell unheeded and unfelt; or sometimes roused an angry storm.

This little family circle was now, in fact, frequently the scene of much domestic strife. All was at variance—every thing jarred—nothing could commingle—nothing could harmonize. There was no peace—no love—no kindness, save on Harriet's side.

Miss Melville, in particular, appeared to have changed her very nature. Once she was the most indulgent—most conceding person in the world: now she was the most implacable and unrelenting. All her former partiality for Harriet was now transferred to Eleanor. But her displeasure ere long assumed even a darker form than this, in the hostile, and persecuting measures, which she adopted towards her once almost idolized Harriet.

Not contented with appearing gloomy, restless, and dissatisfied, she was, if possible, more strongly inimical than ever to her religious

profession. Her frank, kind, and affectionate manner had vanished, whilst all the angry feelings of her heart seemed to find an object in the sweet and gentle Harriet. Her whole demeanour betrayed the proud and sullen spirit working powerfully within, and scornfully resisting the unexpected opposition presented to her will.

Her determined intention, of course, was to turn Harriet from her purpose; and in prosecuting this, she was unconscious of weariness, as well as regardless of the pain which she inflicted on her young and feeling friend. From morn till noon—from noon till “dewy eve,” she was indefatigable in her exertions. Nothing could soften her unkindness—nothing could induce her to relinquish her object of pursuit.

Many and various were her modes of attack. She seemed to think that a little perseverance, severity, and scorn would stifle the rising flame; and, therefore, she determined that perseverance, severity and scorn should not be wanting. She accordingly allowed not a moment to be lost—nor a single opportunity neglected; nor any method of threat—nor measure of harshness which her ingenuity could devise, to be left

unemployed, for bringing her refractory charge to a submissive spirit.

Thus she endeavoured with all her energy, for a considerable time, to combat the evil, till at last she perceived that her severity was of no avail, in conquering the strong and stubborn scruples of Harriet's mind. She therefore resolved on milder means, and these she employed again with sanguine expectation. But all was in vain. She could not gain a single point, nor obtain even a promise to reconsider the matter, or suspend the conclusion.

Harriet was immoveable ; combining, however, unflinching firmness with the greatest mildness. She would patiently listen to Miss Melville's vehement and angry reasonings, but at the same time eloquently plead the high authority of Heaven as the sole guide of her choice.

As the period of their departure for India drew near, Miss Melville, finding all her efforts so utterly hopeless, desisted at length from her pertinacious harassments ; and her ebullitions of rage, exhausted, perhaps by their very violence, began to subside. She adopted, however, the opposite, and the no less painfully annoying expedient, of sullen taciturnity. Eleanor was now her only companion—her only

confident. She consulted with her upon every plan, and seemed not to consider her former favourite, worthy of the least regard, nor even entitled in any degree to the slightest notice.

And so Harriet would be left alone—to sit at a distance—perhaps at the other extremity of the apartment—silent, solitary, and disregarded ; whilst the cold neglect—the estranged affection, which she experienced, as well as her approaching separation from her sister, would painfully engage her saddest thoughts.

She was particularly grieved at Eleanor's demeanour, who, although she had not been so violent in her opposition as Miss Melville, had yet been sufficiently inexorable and severe. Her very looks, so distant—so dark—so disapproving, appeared to Harriet's sensitive perception, more marked with real unkindness, than even the harsh words, and stormy assaults which she had borne from the other.

And now there was nothing but coldness and reserve, where all had once been cordiality and love. Harriet knew nothing of *their* plans, and she was afraid to request them to listen to hers. Her dearest friends on earth now seemed as indifferent about her, and her future welfare, as if she had been a perfect stranger. Eleanor

was told—Miss Melville was silent ; and Harriet was left to sigh in sadness over the change in their affections.

This was the bitterest part of her sorrow, and she felt it more keenly than she had ever anticipated, or even was willing to confess to herself. A little opposition she had indeed expected—but she fondly hoped that it would soon pass away, and that at least painful separation would not be embittered by strange-ment of heart. 'And although removed' by distance almost immeasurable, she had still trusted, that their affectionate hearts would beat for her as warmly as ever they had done : and though a wide world of waters should soon intervene between them, still she had flattered herself, that the emotions of their bosoms would respond to hers, and that sometimes a sigh for her would be heaved, in their gayest and happiest moments.

But, oh ! it was painful—exquisitely painful to be banished from their thoughts, and severed from their hearts—to feel this last and only love-tie broken asunder !

Notwithstanding, however, the unkind treatment she had received, Harriet was not the hated individual which she had supposed her-

self to be: Amid all the seeming coldness and indifference, which her sister and Miss Melville displayed towards her, and of which she had complained to her own heart so much, she was still in fact the object of their deepest interest—their most anxious solicitude, and almost the exclusive subject of their thoughts and conversation.

They were incessantly on the watch to discover the slightest indication of a change of resolution; and though indeed they blamed her much, and now acted harshly towards her—nay, though they had often resolved to leave her to reap the fruits of her folly, yet frequently their better and kindlier feelings would prevail, and they could not bear the thoughts of this, their best-beloved one, remaining behind them in meanness and obscurity—alone and unprotected, whilst they were enjoying the comforts of wealth and of an elegant home.

She had entwined herself around their hearts; and even in the midst of the errors which they censured, they could never bring their minds to the sad resolution of a final separation.

But how they should act, they were utterly at a loss to determine.

CHAPTER XX.

“ Companion of my tender age,
 Serenely gay and sweetly sage,
 How blithesome were we wont to rove
 By verdant hill or shady grove.”

* * * * *

“ But now the pleasing dream is o’er,
 These scenes must charm me now no more,
 Lost to the fields, and torn from you,
 Farewell, a long—a last adieu.”

Miss Melville at length began to consider, that the strange state of mind into which Harriet had fallen, could not last for ever, and that when left to herself, the ferment of her folly would gradually subside, or eventually expire.

A strong delusion had taken possession of her imagination, but this indefatigable lady now thought that the measures which she had adopted for correcting the evil, were certainly

wrong. She had noticed it too much—attached too much importance to it—opposed it with violence when she ought to have acted with mildness, or let it alone.

Ah! here lay the error into which she had fallen. The delusion had grown, and strengthened by the very opposition which it had encountered. And she now recollected, what she had so strangely forgotten, that a spirit of contradiction had ever been a feature in Harriet's character, hitherto evinced, however, in a harmless manner, and productive only of innocent amusement.

She therefore proposed, lest her uncle should be offended by any longer delay, that Eleanor should proceed alone to India, by the present opportunity, whilst she should herself remain at home, at least for a while, with the captious Harriet, till she was restored to her sound mind; and that in all probability, they would follow in the next vessel.

The plan appeared feasible. To Eleanor at least, it answered two ends, for it relieved her anxiety respecting her sister, and at the same time realized her own desires and expectations.

But Harriet knew nothing of all this. She had not been honoured with a place in their

counsels, nor permitted to share any part of their confidence ; and it was not until the very day on which she accompanied them both to the ship, that was to convey her sister to her home among strangers, that she learned that Miss Melville was still, for a time, to be her guardian and companion.

And in giving Harriet this unexpected intelligence, Eleanor seemed disposed to reproach her for the sacrifice, which she had thus compelled Miss Melville to make—for the strife and disunion which she had introduced into their happy little family, and the separation which her conduct had occasioned between them. But her own heart chid her for the unkind words, with which she was about to embitter their last parting. She was therefore silent on that painful topic, and even at last was so far overcome with Harriet's evidently excessive emotion, at this, their final interview, as to reply affectionately to all her ardent expressions of attachment to herself, and gratitude to Miss Melville.

But there was little time for the display of either feeling, for now every moment was occupied with the confusion and excitement of immediate departure.

A few more moments passed, and the hurry and bustle on board increased. Now the scene became peculiarly and painfully affecting. Brothers might be seen grasping the hand of brothers, in a fond and almost convulsive pressure, reluctant to utter the last adieu ; whilst parents embraced their children, and children their parents, and husbands their wives ; fathers and mothers—sons and sisters—the whole collected charities of life, have met—it may be, for the last time,—have met, and—have parted.

Mingled groups of affectionate friends, and weeping relatives, have left the vessel, and now stand on shore in a motley throng, to watch and wait the final departure of those whom they love. In imagination they follow them, destined as they are to brave the dangers of the mighty—the deceitful—the dark-heaving deep ! Ah ! how many a soul was sad and sorrowful ! How many a bosom throbbed with the full swell of smothered feeling !

There stood a wife about to resign, through stern necessity, the husband of her love, and the father of her children, to years of toil, and pain, and melancholy absence, in order to obtain the scanty subsistence which he could not,

by his utmost exertions, procure at home. Alas ! her mind was filled with dark foreboding thoughts of the fatal land, where the scythe of the fell destroyer mows down, in reckless and unsparing haste, such multitudes of victims !

And there again, ~~was~~ a sister, whose young fair face was deeply ^{and} shaded with sorrow—whose full dark eyes were so bedimmed with tears, that she was scarcely able to discern, through the dewy haze which overshadowed their brightness, the dear distant form, as it receded from her view, of the playmate of her childhood—the brother of her love, and the friend and companion of her young and happy days. But her grief was to some extent relieved, and the dark moment brightened by the sweet beams of hope, which gilded from afar the gloom of the horizon—by the full measure of happiness, which her buoyant fancy had painted as the future inheritance of that beloved one.

And the little grave face too, which appeared by her side, had its season of sunshine for the moment overcast, by the painful thought that the partner of its parlour games, and the promoter of its wilder out-door sports, was to share in, and promote its happy games, and

sports no more. But its hour of grief was transient. To-morrow's sun saw its little cloud of sorrow completely dissipated, and all its former joyousness in full and active play !

And there too, was the proud father, smothering his yearning affection, and checking the rising sigh which was struggling for utterance from his deeply-heaving breast, amid the bright visions of happiness, wealth, and honour, with which he had profusely decked the future eventful career of his departing boy. Alas ! that we should so often see the honours, fruitlessly sought—the wealth, but in prospect still ; and the happiness so eagerly pursued—yet always found awanting !

Still almost every one in this interesting group—in the midst of the soul-saddening separations which were taking place, were even now overleaping, in their ardent thoughts, the huge distance of time and space about to intervene between them, and the objects of their love ; and were even already breathing fond wishes for the anticipated joyful return ; and even saw already realized in fancy's forming eye, all that their hearts had so brightly boded.

But there was still another whom we have not yet noticed—a sister too—just parted from

a sister! Her young and beautiful countenance is also saddened by deep and poignant sorrow.—But her's is a peculiar grief. It is mingled with, and embittered by many painful conflicting emotions—unbrightened by a single ray of sadly-pleased remembrance—unalleviated by any happy and hopeful anticipation of the future.

She is not looking forward to some blessed future period when time's fleeting wing shall at length have re-united her to the object of her fondest affection. She dreams not of the distant destination of this beloved and only sister, as a land of enchantment—of promise and of bliss; where the beautiful earth is clothed with ten-fold beauty—where the beams of the effulgent sun, dispense their brightest radiance—where the waves of the mighty ocean flow with their fullest tide! Its gay and glittering images, have no existence in her imagination. She sees not the rich and fruitful fields, which seem from afar to invite the hand of the reaper to gather their golden produce, without toil or trouble. Nor thinks she at all, of how much of this goodly and luxuriant harvest, shall yet be the heritage of her, whom she so ardently loves!

Ah! no!—if her thoughts and feelings were allowed utterance, they would speak thus,

“ Alas!—alas! And can it be? Eleanor!—my sister! Where is she?—Gone! Is it possible?—Are we really parted?—This dreaded separation—is it at last effected? Shall I see her no more?—Is she gone for ever? Alas! is it even so? Has she indeed forsaken home, and happiness, and religion? Is she indeed encountering dangers—difficulties—death itself; periling both time and eternity; tearing asunder affection’s dearest ties—all—for uncertain earthly distinction—for empty glitter—for the passing splendours of an hour—for the fleeting shadows of a moment? Ah! me—what thoughts are these? Eleanor!—Eleanor!—my sister! ————— ”

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Life, with all its bitterness, is a draught soon drunk ; and though we have many changes, and many separations from those near and dear to us, to fear on this side the grave—beyond it, we know of none.”

SCENES such as the one we have now described, though often painfully distressing, yet occur so frequently in the changing and chequered experience of life, that few indeed seem impressed by them, or even so much as conscious of their existence.

The world moves on in its mighty course, without ever pausing to cast a momentary glance—or to heave a solitary sigh—or to shed a passing tear, over scenes of sorrow, which often tear asunder the tenderest sympathies of the soul, and wring with bitter agony the finest feelings of the heart.

Ah ! who can tell what Harriet felt, as she remained behind, lingering on the shore, and watching in silent sadness, the receding progress of the vessel, in which Eleanor had em-

barked, and which was bearing her slowly but surely away from her native land.

And long had the affectionate sister stood, and long had she lingered ; but the deepening shades of evening too speedily spread themselves around, obscuring the heavens with their sombre hue, and finally settling in one dark cloudy mass, far in the horizon—at length hid her beloved Eleanor from her view, and unwillingly forced her to retire.

With a heavy heart, she entered the carriage, in which Miss Melville was already seated : Nor, during their silent and unsocial drive back to Widow Linmore's cottage, did her sorrow, in the slightest degree, subside.

Miss Melville herself was evidently absorbed in deep and painful thought, and took no notice whatever of her companion, as if perfectly unconscious of her presence. This cold indifference was of course but little calculated to remove, or mitigate the heavy grief which preyed on Harriet's mind ; and upon their arrival at the cottage, what with the lonesomeness of her own heart, and the sight of the place which her sister had so lately left, her feelings became painfully oppressive.

How changed, indeed, did the cottage ap-

pear! It had once been the scene of many happy days—but it was now saddened by the absence of one who had never been absent before. Harriet sunk upon a seat, overpowered by the various conflicting emotions with which her mind was filled. She scarcely dared to lift her eyes to look around. It seemed as if she had suffered some sad bereavement—as if some lovely and beloved one had just been consigned to the silent grave, leaving a dreary vacuum behind, which mourning affection refused to fill. The chamber seemed desolate. The aspect of every thing around appeared to have assumed a new—a strange and a dismal form; yet still recalled a thousand endearing associations of past enjoyment, now embittered by the loss of the beloved sharer of her once happy moments.

Miss Melville appeared to participate in her emotion; for she looked around the little apartment with a countenance upon which regret and sadness were strongly depicted.

But her sympathy in Harriet's feelings had no effect in softening her heart, or altering her cold and distant demeanour towards her. She rather seemed to regard the unintentional offender with additional displeasure and cha-

grin ; scarcely deigning to accord a cold and careless inclination of her head, as Harriet, worn out with the excitement of the day, affectionately bade her good night, and retired to her own apartment.

The next morning, penetrated with a warm sense of gratitude towards Miss Melville, for the disinterested sacrifice which, she supposed, this lady had made for her sake, Harriet again directed her endeavours to conciliation between them.

“ How, indeed, can I sufficiently thank you, my dear Miss Melville,” she said, affectionately taking her hand, “ for what you have sacrificed on my account. Believe me, I shall ever entertain a deep sense of your kindness
——.”

But she was quickly checked in the expression of the kindly feelings of her heart.

“ Oh ! do not flatter yourself so far, Harriet,” interrupted Miss Melville, coldly withdrawing her hand, “ as to suppose that it is for your sake, or your gratification, that I remain in this country. Nothing can be farther from the truth. You have forfeited my regard irretrievably—you have lost my love for ever. Nothing, I assure you, but my promise to your

dying mother, never to leave her children, till the grave itself divided us, or till haply their good fortune should place them in honour and felicity, has prompted the resolution which I have now adopted. Eleanor is going, where she will be both honoured and happy.—But you—poor foolish girl! what should become of you, if you were left alone, or were permitted to proceed to the utmost extent of your wild and enthusiastic imaginations? It was this consideration that induced me to remain at home, although my inclinations would gladly have chosen another and a better result. But selfishness,” she added, in a bitter and upbraiding tone, “is ever regardless of the happiness of others, and shrinks not from sacrificing the feelings, or the interests of any, in order to secure its own gratification.”

The cold and cutting calmness of Miss Melville's reply, deeply wounded the sensitive soul of Harriet. It was so unprovoked—so different from what she had expected—so prophetic of future sorrow, and, considering her already aroused sensibilities, so unjustly and cruelly severe, that it chilled her heart, and quenched her spirit.

She involuntarily drew back the hand which

she had so frankly extended, in the first warmth of her feelings—looked mournfully, and half-reproachfully at her inexorable companion, and then heaved a deep but smothered sigh. How could she but feel poignantly and intensely? Every thing was so changed since the well-remembered time when Miss Melville had regarded her with such fondness and affection—when every feature of her countenance beamed towards her with such satisfaction—when every accent of her voice breathed such kindness, and when every smile upon her lip expressed such complacency! Oh! she had not indeed anticipated so sudden and cruel a reverse! She had once been the object of love and attention—she was now the object of hatred and scorn. Even her sister—her own and only sister—her Eleanor—her beloved friend—her constant companion from childhood's earliest days till now—she, from whom she had never concealed a thought—whom she loved so ardently—whose departure she was lamenting so deeply—even *she* was estranged in her affections from her!

Poor Harriet! She had long resisted this painful conclusion: but the chilling reflection was now forced upon her mind in all its ter-

rible reality, and aroused in her soul a tempest of keen and conflicting feeling, and filled her heart with bitterness unfelt before, and inexpressible ! She felt her bosom swell under the painful and the oppressive influence which weighed her spirit down ; till at length, bending her head, and covering her face with both her hands, in the attitude of deep and overwhelming sorrow, she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of long-restrained and bitter tears.

“ There was once a time, Harriet,” was the single remark of her consoling companion, when she saw her thus deeply affected ; “ there was once a time, when sorrow or emotion could not be excited in your bosom, without awakening similar emotion in mine. But such a time is gone, and I now regard this scene as the ebullition of a misguided mind, or the effects of a spurious sensibility.”

“ Alas ! ” cried Harriet, raising her head, but speaking in a voice of undissembled sorrow, “ how unfortunate am I, that no one will enter into my feelings, or give credit to my motives, or appreciate the importance of the exalted principles which actuate my conduct ! ”

“ Misguided girl !—Have you not yourself

to blame? Have you not alienated the affections of your best friends on earth, and driven away those who would have cherished you, and fondly sympathized with every emotion of your heart? And now you are feeling the effects of your folly, and weeping to find yourself alone, disliked, and disregarded. Did I not tell you that this would be the case?"

"Dearest Miss Melville," was Harriet's gently entreating reply, while a few large tears rolled unbidden down her cheek; "do I desire to drive you away?—Ah! no—deeply do I deprecate the very idea.—Let me still have a share in your warm affection.—Oh! with what gladness would I return to your love—most joyfully indeed, believe me."

"But that is impossible," returned Miss Melville, though, with some apparent emotion, "as long as you continue in your present strange delusion. The time, however, may come, when you may at last be convinced of your error, and then most gladly will I open my arms, and my heart, to receive you."

"Ah! then," said Harriet, speaking firmly and deliberately; but at the same time, with a subdued and gentle voice; "if my restoration to your favour must be purchased at such

a price as the surrender of my hopes of eternal life, I must just be content to remain the hated object that I am. No power on earth shall ever break my solemn and firm resolve. I shall bear your hatred the best way I can, and endeavour to repay it only with my prayers—my forgiveness, and even my affection.”

A deep silence followed, which neither seemed disposed to break. But a continued and a cold reserve was in consequence maintained by Miss Melville towards her contumacious charge.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ Bear me, Pomona! to thy citron groves ;
To where the lemon and the piercing lime,
With the deep orange, glowing through the green
Their lighter glories blend. Lay me reclin’d
Beneath the spreading tamarind that shakes,
Fann’d by the breeze, its fever-cooling fruit.

————— Or lead me through the maze,
Embowering endless, of the Indian fig ;
Or thrown at gayer ease, on some fair brow,
Let me behold, by breezy murmurs cool’d,
Broad o’er my head, the verdant cedar wave,
And high palmettos lift their graceful shade.”

•

BUT now, shall we not turn our attention, for a little, to the absent Eleanor, and inquire what were the thoughts, feelings, and emotions produced on her mind, by her separation from her sister, her friends, and her country ?

Ah ! surely at this moment when “ hope shook her radiant locks,” and when the world seemed to present its choicest offering of honours and of blessing, and when the distant

sunny clime to which she was proceeding, lay before her eye, clad in all the gay and brilliant colours with which her young fancy had decked it—surely at such a moment, it could not be expected that many deep feelings of sorrow and regret—that many dark thoughts of clouds and gloom, would prevail amid the bright assemblage of joyful emotions, with which she hailed her departure from her native land.

Yet true it is, some slightly saddened thoughts *did* arise in her mind, as she bade her sister farewell, and saw her deep distress, and felt her affectionate embrace, and reflected that, perhaps, this might be the last adieu—the last embrace—the last time that she should ever see her—for, who could tell?

And this feeling of sadness was not lessened, when at length the vessel was under weigh, and she felt herself receding imperceptibly from known and familiar places. Her heart filled with inexplicable sorrow as she took her last look of her dear and only sister; and with something of a kindred feeling of affection, she placed herself at a convenient station on deck, and stood with her eye fixed, in a lingering gaze, on her distant form, till she could no longer distinguish her—till she seemed to min-

gle, and be lost, in the moving outline of the motley throng that had gathered upon shore.

Perhaps the dismal and dusky time of eve that was rapidly advancing, had shed some of its sombre influence over her—but, indeed, when Eleanor found herself alone, and for the first time in her life, distant from those whom she loved—and when she saw the dark massive form of the city she had left, sinking behind her in the increasing distance, and thought of the immeasurable waste of waters which she had to traverse before she arrived at her destined home—and heard nothing but the hoarse cry of the mariners, and the noise of the waves dashing against the vessel's side—and felt nothing but the cold sea-breeze chilling her frame—then it was for the first time, that a sense of loneliness, sorrow, and heaviness of heart deeply oppressed her, which even the bright perspective of wealth and distinction, fitted though they were to dazzle her imagination, failed for the moment to dissipate.

But this cloud of sorrow was transient. It overshadowed for an instant her youthful brow—but the gloom that had gathered passed quickly away, and gladness again shone forth from beneath it, and the unwelcome guest that

had obtruded on her happiness was speedily dismissed. Scarcely had it burdened the buoyant impulse of her breast, when the sweet rays of hope gleamed gladly again, and the high pulse of life beat strongly as before. The noon of night expired—gloomy visions vanished! The spirits of darkness fled at the glance of the next rosy dawn!

And it was indeed a bright and beautiful morning. Not a dark spot obscured—nor a fleecy cloud shaded the full unbroken canopy of blue, which spread its azure loveliness over the boundless sky. The sun shone brightly in the high vault of heaven; yet in a gracious mood, softening his dazzling splendour, threw down a thousand of his most sparkling rays, to glisten, and dance, and play in the darkly coloured azure of the watery bosom of the deep; while calmly—gently—softly the land-breeze still stole over them, tempering by its zephyr breathings, the ruder gales of the vast expansive ocean.

Thus nature ceded her most attractive charms to restore to Eleanor placidity of mind. Nor was it in vain. The novelty of the scene—the bright and glowing sky—the fresh delicious breeze—even the white swelling sails—

the ceaseless working of the waves as they heaved in their might beneath her, and the countless wonders of the vast expanse of waters extending around her—all filled and furnished her mind with happier thoughts, and happier feelings. She looked around—and smiled—and exulted—and felt once more that there was a bright and fortunate destiny awaiting her!

Truly, even now, the young heiress seemed to feel, as if she had already entered upon her kingdom of anticipated greatness, and experienced the high satisfaction of finding that even here, in this little epitome of life, she was considered the chief object of attention and regard. In fact, Miss Melville, in arranging the circumstances concerning her passage, had not concealed the rank, the connections, and the prospects of her young friend; but, on the contrary, had revealed every thing that could gratify her own pride, or enhance the responsibility connected with the charge.

No small degree of care had, therefore, been expended for her comfort and convenience. And eventually every accommodation the situation could command, and every amusement tending to relieve the sameness of the scene,

or lighten the tedium of the time that crept so wearily away, were put in requisition.

Eleanor deemed herself supremely happy. The attention which was paid her, gratified her pride—administered strength to her rising ambition, and served to embody in almost actual reality, many of her bright anticipations of future felicity.

How strong is the propensity of the human mind to form for itself, gay and lovely images of future happy days! It leaves behind the past—the sweet and peaceful past, of their childhood and their youth,—perhaps the happiest portion of the vain dream of life!—and even the present moment, though rich in fleeting blessedness, is forgotten and despised, for the false and distant future, bright with prophetic visions, unfolding and fulfilling the sweet promises of hope!

In the course of a long and tedious voyage, much mutual and intimate intercourse must necessarily take place among the persons whom Providence has thus thrown together!

Some of Eleanor's companions were as young as herself, as buoyant in their spirits, and as happy in their hopes. Many of them were well educated and highly intelligent. But even

their learning and intelligence were unable to correct their mistaken and falsely excited notions of the distant land to which they were proceeding.

Nothing but brilliant ideas filled their youthful minds. The dread of disappointment never for a single moment mingled with their thoughts, as they joyfully surveyed the wide field of promise extending before them.

How fondly they talked with all the glowing eloquence of anticipated novelty, of all that they should see—of all they should enjoy in the land of orient light! How they would cluster closer and closer together, as the tale went round, and its unnumbered excellencies formed the theme of their animated praises! With what rapture they would paint living images of brightness! What pearls and jewels glittered in their fancies!

The gay and splendid palaces—the great and gorgeous temples—the rich array of princely dignitaries, sparkling with the spoils of the diamond mines—the exhaustless fertility of the heaven-favoured land, in its matchless luxuriance, fragrance, and beauty—the sweet clear streams, meandering as brightly as the streams of hope itself—the broad deep rivers, rolling

onwards in their majesty and might, dazzling the eye by the intensity of light reflected from their crystal bosoms—and the sky,—the bright and sunny sky, glowing like a sapphire, and unsullied by a cloud ! Yea, all the concomitants of an ardent and untutored fancy—the high—the happy—the visionary—the unknown—the sublime—the beautiful—the good—the poetic, and the gaily-coloured—all—all arose to their illumined eye in bright, in boundless, and endless perspective !

Oh ! what a rich and fertile field of delightful conversation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ ————— I saw

The clouds hang thick and heavy o'er the deep ; -
And heavily upon the long slow swell,
The vessel laboured on the labouring sea,
The reef-points rattled on the shivering sail,
At fits, the sudden gusts howled ominous,
Anon, with unremitting fury raged ;
High rolled the mighty billows, and the blast
Swept from their sheeted sides the showery foam.”

Southey.

HITHERTO the winds had been propitious, the ocean tranquil, and the weather delightful.

“ Ah !” said our gay young voyagers, “ we had heard much of the tempests, the storms, and the dangers of the mighty deep ; but surely they are yet to come ! We triumph over wind and wave ! Was there over a voyage so prosperous—so pleasant ? Behold, how rapidly and smoothly we glide along ! How gallantly our noble ship careers over the yielding waters of the dark-blue sea ! How largely

her sails are filled ! How gracefully her pennons wave, in the full fresh swell of the ocean breeze !”

But these congratulations were premature. Even in this secure and happy moment, the serene heavens shone with a false and transient smile. The usual indications of a sudden and violent change of weather, had already begun to be apparent. The swelling gale was evidently nursing, in its bosom, the first-born struggles of the mighty tempest ; and the deceitful deep, even in its tranquil loveliness, was darkly brooding over the terrific displays of its future fury. Far in the horizon, the experienced eye of the mariner, could easily detect the cloudy speck that foreboded coming ill ; mustering its strength—gathering slowly but surely, its dread volume, of gloom, amid the unsuspecting beauty of the scene ; spreading, like some black and noisome pestilence, over the whole azure vault ; increasing—deepening—darkening, and giving at last, nearer and more solemn warning of its dread approach.

The billows of the ocean now rapidly increased in magnitude and strength—heaving convulsively, as, if they had been agitated by

some powerful but invisible demon of the deep—now mounting majestically toward heaven—and then opening, with fearful violence, into a deep terrific gulph below. A huge volume of white vapour was seen in the farthest extremity of the ocean, ascending to the heavens, and mingling its misty light with the gloomy, portentous blackness of the sky. Numerous dark clouds swept, in quick succession, over the streak of clear blue sky still visible in the heavens, as if incensed at its bold continuance; as if determined that not a single sweet spot should be left to brighten the gloomy darkness of the scene. It still, however, lingered, like the last radiant ray of hope—or the last beam of departing glory—or the sweet devotedness of love, softening and shading—brightening and illuminating, in beautiful and varied minglings, some dark scene of human woe.

But the storm continued. The hurry and alarm of the moment increased: The quick heavy tread upon deck—the rattling of the cordage—the reefing of the sails—the rapid movements of the mariners, in apparent confusion, though in real order and perfect discipline—the loud hoarse cries of the brave ac-

tors in the scene of danger, as they spoke to their companions, or shouted the customary words of reply to the calm prompt orders of their superiors—all blending with the howlings of the tempest, added greatly to the uneasy apprehensions of the trembling inexperienced voyagers.

But still, though violently tossed, the vessel rode in triumph over the swelling waves. The skill of the commanders, and the exertion of the mariners, keeping pace with the growing tempest, she appeared for a time to bid defiance to its utmost fury.

She still gallantly and faithfully kept her course. A thousand times she seemed to be engulfed in the terrific vale, formed by the watery mountains which rolled in dread succession over the surface of the angry ocean. But still with giant strength, she seemed to spurn the threatening destruction, and she would re-appear—mounting with invincible majesty on the heaving bosom of the mountain-billow—tower, for a moment, on its slippery summit—and then disappear, as if lost for ever, in the abyss below.

But the violence of the storm rapidly increased, and the once distant roar of its ad-

vancing terrors,—now burst forth at once; lashing into fury the agitated ocean—rousing into dread magnificence its cloud-touching billows—blending with its angry groanings, the furious blasts of the whirlwind. At one moment, the raging elements would pour forth their fiercest vengeance—and then, in the next, they would seem assuaged, and remain for an instant, in deceitful calmness, as if restraining their wrath, and mustering their might; only however to break once more with tremendous fury over the devoted ship.

At last, the giant form of the gallant vessel that had so lately urged her daring prow through the dark foam-crested billows, as if scorning to be arrested in her proud and prosperous career, now shook like a trembling leaf, and was tossed, like a fluttering feather, on the mighty deep.

Her strong, lofty masts, though they had already braved many a blast, were quivering and bending, like a reed in the wind. Her decks were deluged by the heavy seas that incessantly dashed over her. She became utter weakness in the potent grasp of the raging tempest! She mounted—she fell—she reeled—she staggered, powerless and unresisting;

till at length, a sudden and impetuous gust, seemed to catch her in its very bosom, and whirled her, swiftly as an arrow, wildly as the winds, along the vast abyss.

The darkness of night now succeeded the thick gloom that had hitherto obscured the heavens, and the gleam of the white foam, as the surges swept by the vessel's side in their "playful ire," was the only relief to the fearful blackness, which overhung the devouring element.

And even the cabin, which the ladies, and the more timid of the male passengers, had never quitted from the commencement of the storm, was filled with a deep and portentous gloom. The dim light of a single lantern, which, in a calmer moment, had been fastened above the door, shed its pale, sickly, and almost expiring glimmer, over the melancholy scene of consternation and misery which reigned below.

Still, the inmates of the cabin had never been properly aware of the full and awful extent of their danger. Their drooping spirits had been cheered—their fainting hearts supported, and their exhausted frames re-animat-ed, and roused to new exertion, by the fond

hope, that the violence of the tempest would speedily abate, or at least, that from the strength of their vessel, and the skill and activity by which she was managed, she might, under the care of a kind superintending Providence, weather the storm, and eventually triumph over the fury of the deep.

But when they sensibly found themselves borne through the waters, with an inconceivably resistless rapidity; when they felt the frailty, yea, the utter weakness of their ark of refuge before the mighty whirlwind; when the sad reality of their appalling situation now burst upon their view—oh! who can describe the agony—the horror of that dread moment?

All exertion was now hopeless. The skill of the pilot was vain, and impotent now was the mariner's strength. Some of the crew had been washed over-board, and the rest clung with despairing tenacity to any thing which, in the darkness of the night, and in the confusion of the scene, afforded the slightest chance of safety from the tremendous waves that every moment burst over the deck.

A few of the more daring of the passengers, induced by a deep and restless anxiety, ven-

tured on deck ; but appalled by the terrors of the merciless deep, were glad to make a speedy retreat to the wretched shelter which the cabin afforded. Ever and anon, the loud shriek of the timid and the trembling, mingling with the deep groans of even the boldest spirits, proclaimed at once the depth of misery and of dark despair ;—chilling every heart with the cold dread of instant death, and arousing in every bosom a still intenser sense of their utter helplessness.

As the night advanced, and the storm continued to rage with unabated fury, the scene in the cabin became still more awful, and deeply agonizing. All earthly distinctions were now dissolved in this dark hour of common calamity. Some sweet infants, unconscious of their danger, were wrapt in peaceful slumbers. Many a frame trembled, and many a lip quivered ; some faces were pale with terror, and some were shrouded in the darkness of despair ; some stout hearts groaned in deepest agony, and some proud spirits frowned with mute and scowling anguish. Some were supporting themselves against the sides of the ship, with their arms sullenly crossed upon their breasts—horror-struck, if not sub-

duced—silent, if not resigned ; some fond and affectionate hearts clung together in all the agony of apparently approaching dissolution ; some were kneeling, and some lay prostrate on the floor, imploring that mercy, which they had never, at least sincerely, implored before.

At that moment, however—a moment of doubt and danger, many a brief, though fervent prayer was raised to Him, who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind ; who is mightier than many waters, or great sea-billows ! Then was the agonizing supplication breathed forth with deeper fervency than ever. The fearful shrieks --the wild imploring cries to heaven, became louder and more frantic. Ah ! none were scoffing now at death, though some had scoffed before !

But even in this sad hour of horror and dismay, there were a few—a pious few—who contemplated the approaching crisis, with comparatively tranquil hearts. Blessed Jesus ! it is thy Divine prerogative to raise the trembling soul above the terrors of the tomb !

Here were two ladies of high rank, but of exalted piety, who, laying aside the weakness

of their sex, at a time when even men of brave hearts stood appalled, mingled among the passengers, and, with as much clearness as the agitation of the moment would allow, unfolded the consolations and promises of the gospel, in all their beauty and fulness, to the wretched and almost frantic associates of their peril.

Here was one in particular—a man of middle age—with a placid brow, and a mild expression of countenance, who appeared to anticipate the coming event with a heavenly tranquillity. He was a Christian—a Christian missionary, bearing the glad tidings of salvation to benighted India.

How unwearied were his exertions—how affecting his appeals—how melting his entreaties, as he presented to the view of his fellow-sufferers, the message of mercy! Tears burst forth from his affectionate heart—not tears of sorrow, but of holy love, as he pointed them to Jesus, the only refuge from the storm—the only covert from the tempest.

His words were clothed with authority, yet glowed with heavenly kindness, while he thus addressed them :—“ Ah ! my friends !” he exclaimed, with a voice of mingled tenderness

and pity, "this is a solemn moment. All reserve must now be laid aside. Eternity is before us—we stand on its dread verge;—a few moments more, and, in all likelihood, we shall be in the presence of God. We are all sinners. The voice of conscience within, convicts us of the solemn fact—the voice of heaven now uttered in the tempest raging around, confirms it; and the word of God, with all the authority of Omnipotence, fully establishes its truth. Oh! it is a solemn thing for a sinner to die! It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!—Look! then, my dear fellow-mortals, and fellow-sinners, and fellow-sufferers, look to the gracious Redeemer—his majesty is Divine—his grace is infinite—his mercy is above the heavens. Behold, the glories of his character—the grandeur of his power—the riches of his mercy—the wonders of his love! He is able to save to the very uttermost—to the uttermost of our calamity—to the uttermost of our misery—to the uttermost of our deep sinfulness. Oh! who can tell the extent of God's *uttermost*? 'Yea, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Oh! then, let us look to Jesus in this dread moment!—let us come

to him with all our burdens, and we shall find rest to our souls.—Hear the words of our gracious Redeemer, ‘Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.’”——

At this moment, a wild shriek of terror burst forth from the exhausted mariners on board ;—

“We are lost—she is gone,—she can never survive this! We perish!—we perish!”—was the frantic cry, as one of the mightiest billows that the ocean ever heaved, arose to their terrific view.

The dread sound pierced the midnight air like the knell of death, and reached the ears of the sufferers below, appalling every heart, and thrilling through every soul. The deepest silence ensued—the heart seemed not to beat—nor the bosom to heave: Not a groan was heard—not a sigh seemed to escape—not a tear to flow. All was suddenly silent as the grave. Yet anon, and this death-like stillness was broken by the wild exclamation of a scoffing infidel, as he beheld, with agonized amazement, the holy man, the servant of the Lord, who had hitherto often been the object of his bitterest scorn, standing before him, in the attitude of earnest entreaty, with a countenance

upon which joy and sorrow—serenity and solemnity—awe and triumph, were singularly and beautifully blended.

Behold the saint, in all the holy tranquillity of heavenly hope! Contemplate the scornful unbeliever! Mark his trembling frame, and the fierce distraction of his looks!—listen to the piercing cry with which he echoes the shriek from above! His eye rolls restlessly around—his features are convulsed—his lips are pale and quivering! He springs forward towards the holy messenger of God—he clasps him in his arms, and wildly exclaims, “Oh! we shall die together!—we shall die together!”

“No,” was the calm but solemn reply, “we must part at the water’s edge. Without an interest in the Saviour you have scorned—you, alas! must perish in your sins. And I—oh! rapturous thought!—I shall be carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom.” * * *

But in the midst of these awful circumstances, there was one fair form, whom we have scarcely noticed. Eleanor!—Eleanor! where was she?

Behold her seated, or rather stretched, on a low bench in that melancholy cabin, with her

arm clinging in despairing agony, around one of its slender pillars—her hair in dishevelled tresses, falling about her pale but lovely countenance. Not a murmur—not a complaint escaped from her lips. But she often heaved deep hollow groans of anguish, seeming to indicate a tempest that raged in her bosom, equalled only by the tempest that raged without. Her eye was fixed—but it was turned upwards, in the lowliest expression of helpless supplication.

Thus we behold the gay, the beautiful, the fortunate Eleanor! But of what avail was her beauty, or her fortune now? How poor is all the wealth of India in a dying moment! How worthless is the world itself, when the spirit is called unprepared into the presence of the Judge of all!

It is in the hour of danger, or of approaching dissolution, when every hope is excluded, and when every avenue of escape is cut off;—when all refuge fails, and the king of terrors presents himself to the sinner, thoughtless and secure, darting his cold, keen, unrelenting eye upon his hapless victims, and hastening to seize them with his cruel and resistless grasp, and to present them, naked—

helpless—trembling, in the presence of the living God :—ah ! then it is, that the real character is disclosed—that the true principles of the heart are evolved, and that the hidden things of the soul are revealed.

Alas ! poor Eleanor ! her thoughts were sad and awful—her fears were overwhelming—her feelings were excited to intolerable anguish.

She was now awakened to a sense of her true situation. Her slumbers were past, and her delusive dreams vanished. Death, in one of his most appalling forms, seemed rapidly approaching, and the dread idea of eternity, in all its vast solemnity, would, ever and anon, plunge her into a fresh paroxysm of horror and despair.

But still the love of life would beat strongly in her breast. Oh ! how her young heart still clung to life ! Oh ! for life—sweet—sweet life ! To breathe once more the gentle air of heaven—to gaze once more on the bright and boundless sky—to tread once more on the green and beautiful earth ! Then, would she not devote her mercifully spared life, to the love and service of the living God ?

She sometimes thought of home—of her happy youth—of her native land ; and her mind would dart, with the rapidity of the lightning's flash, to the soft scenes of remembered happiness—now gone for ever ! Oh ! the unutterable—the inconceivable sweetness, as well as bitterness, that mingled in that thought !

She remembered Harriet, and she breathed in silent agony, her loved—her hallowed name ; “ Harriet ! my sister !—how happy thou ! but I—how sunk in woe ! Oh ! for one look before I die of her—my best beloved one ! To share once more in her heavenly consolations—to hear once more her tender, pure, and holy counsels—to be assured, in her own sweet language, of the rich pardoning mercy of Heaven !”

The memorable night would then rise to her recollection, on which deep impressions of divine things had been first made upon her mind ;—and the remembrance of her former participation in these blessed and exalted hopes, would flit, in dark and fitful visions, across her agitated mind. She remembered God,—and was troubled. She had left her first love,—and she was now herself, desolate and forsaken. She had grieved the Holy Spirit, and it was

but too evident he had withdrawn his consolations. She had forgotten the Saviour—the shield—the hiding-place ; the refuge from the storm, and the covert from the tempest !

She now remembered how she had sinned, and how she had fallen ! Her conscience smote her—her courage failed her—her soul sunk within her. She felt herself guilty in the sight of God, and she trembled with terror in his holy presence. The torturing emotions of her mind—the bitter anguish of her heart—the despairing accents of her voice—and the changeful workings of her countenance—all confessed her feelings and convictions, that it was a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Still, sometimes a beam of celestial light—a ray of radiant hope, bright as the sparkling stars that gild the glorious canopy of heaven, would shoot athwart the midnight darkness of her soul, and she would then remember the character of the compassionate Saviour—his unparalleled love—his boundless mercy—his adorable sovereignty ; the riches of his grace, and the glory of his power. His hand was not shortened, that it could not save ! His ear was not heavy, that it could not hear !

True, indeed, she had sinned—deeply sinned! But that very Lord whom she had thus offended, was the only refuge—and this refuge was open still; and might not she still be as welcome to that shelter as ever? Oh! there was something ineffably soft, sweet, and soothing in that blessed thought!

She would therefore come, and cry with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner;”—or she would pour forth her sorrows with wayward, rebellious, and smitten Jonah, “I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet will I look again toward thy holy temple;”—or she would exclaim, with the prodigal son, “Father, I have sinned in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy child; make me as one of thy hired servants.” Father;—Father, forgive me!—“Receive me graciously, and love me freely.”

* * * *

Oh! how vast and wonderful are the power and grandeur of the Ruler of the universe! He is clothed with majesty, and girded with strength. Clouds and darkness are round about Him—He covers himself with light as with a garment! His glory blazes in the sun—sparkles in the stars—shines in the blue con-

cave arch of heaven—beams in the beauties of the earth—frowns in the tempest, and smiles in the calm ! He holdeth the wind in his fist, and the waters of the deep in the hollow of his hand. He wraps the ocean in swaddling bands ; and walks upon the wings of the wind ; and rides upon the heavens by his name JAH ! The Lord on high is mightier far than the noise of many waters—yea, than the mighty waves of the ocean !

He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

He looked forth upon the troubled deep—and the tempest subsided. The wind was hushed, and the sea ceased from its raging. It seemed to have exhausted its whole strength and fury, in its last and mightiest convulsive throe.

When the night withdrew its sable mantle, and the morning light softly and sweetly dawned on the ocean, though the waters still heaved in fearful commotion, and the vessel was marked by the stormy ravages of the over-night—the danger was past. She rode in safety. A fresh light breeze from the gentle south prevailed, and there was now a comparative calm. The sky smiled as brightly, as if nothing had

occurred to disturb its equanimity ; while, far in the east, a rich and beautiful crimson betokened that the sun was about to resume his reign with unwonted splendour.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“——The gallant bark from Albion’s coast,
The storms all weathered and the ocean crossed,
Shoots into port, at some well-havened isle,
Where spices breathe, and brighter seasons smile.
There sits quiescent on the floods, that show
Her beauteous form reflected clear below,
While airs impregnated with incense play,
Around her fanning light her streamers gay.”

Cowper.

DANGER and sorrow are sometimes speedily removed ; and when they are past, they are as quickly forgotten ; and when they are forgotten, they seem to have fled away—to return no more.

Such are the dreams of fancy ! Such are the unstable resolves of the human heart ! Such are the fleeting impressions of the hour of trial ! And such were the feelings of our travellers on the deep.

Their minds borne down, for a time, by the

pressure of their troubles, regained their elasticity when the troubles passed away. Once more the smiles of fortune invited their embrace, and high anticipations awaited their arrival; and full unchecked prosperity would seem to crown their many plans; and pure unmingled happiness would promise to be the sure result.

How foolish are the thoughts of man! Was there no one there, in that young, joyous group, doomed to feel, haply at no distant period, the powerful and pestilential touch of the fatal eastern clime, that would dissolve in a moment, the vain dreams of his fancy, and lay him prostrate in the dust?

But at length the vessel neared the radiant line; and now our ardent voyagers began to feel some portion of that fervent heat which they had expected, and which, while in prospect, had been so easily endured. And it was wonderful how the frames of the most vigorous relaxed! how the energies of the boldest spirits sunk; how the lilies of the loveliest faces drooped; and how the healthy bloom of England's distant clime, faded beneath the potent influence of the tropical sun—the burning breezes of the torrid zone, carrying on their wings, fever and disease.

After a trying season, however, of the heat's continued and oppressive power, advancing into more southern latitudes, a temperate breeze filled their sails, and cooling the throbbing temple, and exhilarating the fainting frame, wafted them cheerfully onwards to the haven of their hopes.

All things must have an end. Even a long voyage, which the weary spirits that endure the delay, are disposed to deem interminable—must come to a close.

At last, one fine, clear, sunny morning, the sight of land was announced from aloft, and a glad responsive burst of joy from the anxious throng below, evinced the satisfaction experienced at the intelligence.

And soon, in fact, land—welcome land, became distinctly visible to all; rising, like a huge black cloud, above the margin of the horizon, and only distinguished from the dark-blue waters, by its massy form, and deeper tint.

To describe the delight felt at this joyful sight, as the dark mass gradually brightened on the view, would be utterly impossible. The eye that had rested for five long, lingering months on the vast wearisome world of waters, where the scene was unvaried, save by its perils,

was relieved, and refreshed, and enraptured by gazing at length on the fair Eastern world, which had dwelt so long, so steadily, and so brightly in their thoughts.

They had now entered the Hoogly, a branch of the sacred Ganges. But, though the entrance of the river was broad and grand, its waters partook not of the crystal limpidness of our young friends' imaginations; whilst some frightful breakers, foamingly extending as far as the eye could reach, somewhat overthrew their fanciful notions of the unmingled pleasantness and beauty of the land of the sun.

In fact, nothing could be more gloomy and unpleasing, than the first sight of India, from the entrance of the sacred Hoogly. The low, marshy, jungle-covered island of Saugor, lay to the east, presenting an appearance of extreme wildness and desolation, and forcibly conveying the idea of a land of pestilence and death. Some ruinous huts and houses stood upon its flat and swampy shore, though almost concealed from view by the rank luxuriance of the foliage which overshadowed them. And farther on, might be seen, the dreary district of the Sunderbunds, with its banks of bare sand or rancid herbage; its wild waste of ve-

getation, and its dense, black, interminable thickets.

But as they advanced onwards, the country gradually assumed a more pleasing appearance. The jungle receded from the shore—signs of cultivation appeared—the woods threw out a gayer green—clumps of the graceful co-coa-palm, and towering plantain; diversified the opening champaign; whilst a cool and refreshing breeze, unmingled with the pestiferous breath of Saugor, was wafted from the shore.

Owing to the intricacy of the passages between the numerous sand-banks, and marshy slets, which abound near its mouth and shores, the navigation of the Hoogly is difficult and tedious. But ere the next day, our ship's company had cleared all obstacles, and were now gallantly sailing before the wind; the river, which had been gradually growing brighter and brighter, rolling on before them in its greatest pride and glory.

And now the landscape became rich, beautiful, and varied. Villages appeared on both banks of the river, interspersed with thick groves, and extensive plantations of trees peculiar to the country. And anon, a gradual

sweep of the majestic stream, disclosed scenes of unparalleled loveliness. What, indeed, on earth could be more brilliant and beautiful than the prospect, which opened to the view of our travellers, as they approached the rich and shining land ! The skies were as lovely as their fancies had painted them. The scenery extending immeasurably beyond the eye's widest range, was perfectly enchanting as witchery itself ; and the whole surrounding landscape glowed with all the unrestrained luxuriance of the heaven-favoured East. It was one of India's brightest days. The river—the broad and silver Hoogly, reflected the splendour of the cloudless sky above, and washed, with its limpid waters, the whole line of lawns that stretched along its banks ; relieving the eye, by their emerald verdure, from the painful glare of the dazzling sun-light. Numerous mansions of elegant form, and varied dimension, glitteringly white ; the windows exhibiting, in pleasing contrast, their green, closed Venetian blinds ; and each surrounded with its richly flowering and fragrant parterre, or its grove-like shrubbery of mango and cypress trees, were scattered upon the shore, in beautiful irregularity.

Small boats of oriental construction, rowed by persons whose novel and grotesque apparel, and whose swarthy and peculiar aspect, proclaimed them to be natives, were moving upon the river, apparently for the purpose of disposing to the vessels that were passing and re-passing, the cocoa-nuts, fruits, flowers, and various vegetable productions of the country, with which their little barks were stored.

Larger vessels of European appearance, but having their sterns tastefully built with the open gallery, and shady verandah of the East, were also to be seen; adding materially to the enlivening effect of the scene.

To the north might be seen a widely extended district of richly cultivated land;—rice-fields, orchards, and gardens, covered with a luxurious infinitude of fruit-trees; abounding with beautiful prospects, and thickly interspersed with villages, overhung with the foliage of the broad and spreading banyan, the tall plantain, or the elegant poplar; and each, with its little crimson flag, trembling in the breeze, the symbol of its sanctuary of degrading superstition.

And now the mighty city, Golden Calcutta itself, appeared in the distance, with its broad

and capacious harbour—its large and handsome fortress ; its houses—its palaces, and its temples—all standing like one vast pile, glittering in the full blaze of the noon-day sun.

But there was one point in the rich and varied landscape which filled the mind of Eleanor with deep and absorbing interest.

This was a magnificent villa, standing in the midst of a tract of high cultivation, and just so near the river, as to yield a prominent mark to the beholder's eye, and yet so distant from it, as to give a large, extensive, and gently inclined slope, to its lawns, and shrubberies, and gardens.

It was her uncle's residence. Who can conceive her pride, and her surprise, when she was informed of this !

But as she gazed, with wonder and delight, on the splendid porticoes, and pillared verandahs of her future home, her attention was arrested by the movements of a large canopied boat, suddenly shooting forth from a landing-place, in the very vicinity of the grounds which pertained to the lordly mansion ; and directing its course towards the vessel which it now rapidly approached.

It proved to be a boat which her uncle had

dispatched, on seeing the English ship advancing up the river, to expedite the landing of the friends, whom he expected to be on board.

As soon as it had reached the vessel, a native servant, bearing in his hand a small silver baton, the mark of his being in the service of a man of high consideration, accompanied by several others of the same class, all dressed in long and flowing robes, large full trousers, and turbans gracefully disposed on the top of the head, came on board; and after a few inquiries at the captain, who directed him to Eleanor—he, of the silver baton, advanced towards her, and with a most profound and reverential salaam, presented to her a neatly-folded letter.

It was a note or order from her uncle, in case the two young ladies and Miss Melville should be on board—for of course he fully expected the arrival of the three—to come on shore with the servants whom he had dispatched to attend them, as it would be much more agreeable to make their landing there, than at the more public Ghaut or landing-place of the city.

Eleanor of course obeyed, and in a few minutes more, she found herself seated under the

awning of her uncle's barge, and rapidly approaching his splendid mansion. She felt gratified by the deeply respectful manner of her attendants; but still something seemed to whisper in her ear that it would have been kind and kinsman-like, had her uncle come himself to meet her; and the fancied slight pained her.

But again she reflected that such a mode of reception might be the custom of the country, and might for aught that she knew, be intended for an honour, though rather peculiar, certainly, and not very pleasant, instead of a neglect. At length, she became reconciled to the thought, and in a very short time, amid the agreeable novelties of her situation, the painful impression was remembered no more.

On landing, she was placed, with all possible care and abundance of ceremony, in a richly accoutred palanquin, and rapidly borne along a shady walk, proceeding in a winding direction from the river, bordered and over-arched with rows of the beautiful sago-palm, varied by the elastic bamboo, and covered with the shadows of the banyan tree, till she was set down at the principal portico of the princely mansion which she had seen from the river.

Never before had a more luxurious combination of natural beauty, and rich design, struck her delighted eye! The house stood in the midst of a smooth and extensive lawn, planted with rare shrubs and costly exotics; adorned with brilliant flowers, and diversified with bower-like groves of cypress trees;—whilst immediately in the centre of this earthly paradise, a small fountain poured its sparkling spray in a constant stream, into a purely white marble basin; and then diverged through various passages, like so many miniature canals, into the surrounding grounds, refreshing the air, and shedding a delightful coolness over the whole scene.

But Eleanor was allowed little time for further observation. Numerous native servants crowded around her, as the palanquin stopped, to honour and attend her;—while numbers more were looking, or waiting, or gliding about, in every direction, to render her every possible mark of attention and regard.

Amid all these demonstrations of respect, however, there was still no indication of her uncle's approach, though here, at least, she expected him to meet and welcome her; and she now felt the apparent neglect more deeply than

she had formerly done—even more than she was willing to confess.

From the principal entrance, Eleanor was led through a hall paved with polished marble, and supported by beautiful Corinthian columns of the same rich material—and thence through a suite of spacious and splendid apartments, all furnished in the most luxurious style of Eastern taste—and again through a second hall, of the same description as the first, though smaller, more tastefully disposed, and more retired. Probably it was the delicate, and rather pensive light, which fell on its dark marble pillars, through the closed Venetian blinds, that gave it this cool and sequestered appearance.

After traversing this last apartment, still following her silent conductors, as they gracefully glided along, Eleanor, half-bewildered, ascended a magnificent stair-case, and on reaching the top, her attendants, throwing open a folding-door, and forming themselves into reverential ranks, ushered her at length into another apartment, more spacious and splendid than any through which she had passed before.

The light-footed menials now retired, and

Eleanor had time to look around her ; which she did with feelings of unmixed surprise, delight, and admiration.

Nothing indeed could be so enchanting as this apartment. Every luxury, every elegance, and every object that was beautiful to the eye, or delightful to the imagination, was here collected.

A magnificent carpet, of a material so fine as almost to seem transparent, covered the floor. On all sides were couches or sofas of the softest and most yielding texture, covered with the richest satin. Handsome tables curiously carved, or painted in those beautiful arabesque designs peculiar to Eastern artists, and overspread with small vases of fine alabaster, crystal, or silver, filled with flowers and costly spices, were disposed about the apartment. And, to crown all, a brilliant lustre was suspended from the lofty ceiling, the crystal drops of which, when illuminated by the rays of the sun, which, ever and anon, glanced obliquely through the half-closed Venetians, sparkled like a thousand diamonds, imparting an appearance of astonishing splendour to the whole on first entering.

Eleanor, however, did not remain long in her

present position, without being at last favoured by an interview with her uncle. She had been seated only for a short time upon one of the luxurious sofas, with which the apartment was more than necessarily filled, admiring the beautiful objects around her, and enjoying the soft delicious air, which stole through the open casement, perfumed by the sweet flowers, and fragrant shrubs of the garden and the lawn—when she heard the bustle of some one approaching.

Her heart beat audibly—she scarcely dared to breathe—she wished this interview over—she felt afraid of she knew not what.——

But now the folding-door was again thrown open, and then followed by an imposing train of attendants, and accompanied by all the parade which usually attends even the domestic movements of the great men of the East—her uncle entered.

Eleanor arose, and attempted to advance to meet him, but, overpowered by a vast variety of contending emotions, her frame trembled—her limbs refused to support her, and she was again obliged to resume her seat.

Her uncle perceived her excessive agitation, and now advanced towards her with a quicker

though still dignified step ;—he took hold of her hand, which she had unconsciously extended, and then pressed it to his lips with so kindly a warmth, that at once restored her failing courage, and banished from her mind the unworthy suspicion of his coldness and reserve. She even ventured to look him fully in the face, and saw, indeed, in the deep interest and fond affection with which he was regarding her, that his heart recognised, and gladly welcomed, the child of his brother.

And now, she not only looked, but she gazed on his countenance, yea, she loved to gaze upon it ; for although it was marked by the ravages of time, and darkened by a long abode in the climates of the sun ;—and although his head was silvered over with grey, and a kind of haughty sternness, somewhat softened, indeed, at this interesting moment, lingered about his high, expansive brow—yet, through all, she could trace the lineaments of a long-lost, but still deeply lamented father.

That sternness, however, ere long, assumed a more marked character, and that kindly expression of countenance, which at first had greeted Eleanor, now gave place to a look of cold displeasure, as he hastily scanned the con-

tents of Miss Melville's letter, of which she was the bearer, and in which a very full account was given of the extraordinary resolution which Harriet had adopted, relative to her visit to India.

He made not a single remark upon the purport of the communication, but finished and folded up the letter in perfect silence and composure, as if nothing had occurred to disturb his equanimity.

But the severity of his countenance did not again relax, even after he entered into some interesting conversation with the more compliant Eleanor; and from that moment, she got a view of his peculiar, and even repulsive, though still kind and generous character, which succeeding years and occurrences only contributed the more painfully to impress upon her mind.

CHAPTER XXV.

A Deity believed, is joy begun ;
A Deity adored, is joy advanced ;
A Deity beloved, is joy matured."

WE shall now return to Harriet, whom we left not very agreeably situated with regard to Miss Melville ; and are sorry to present her again to the reader, in circumstances still more painfully annoying.

Miss Melville, in resolving to remain in England, calculated fully on the ultimate success of her plan ; and although she fixed no time for this happy consummation, yet she looked forward to no distant period, when Harriet would at length be convinced of her error, and would joyfully follow her sister to India, and be restored once more to the high place which, in former and more favoured times, she had maintained in their affections.

But as this season of expected reaction had never arrived—but rather seemed to recede,

Miss Melville, at last, became deeply incensed, and treated Harriet with increasing cold neglect, or cruel scorn, or harsh recrimination.

Observing the powerful influence which the ministrations of the gospel with which she was favoured, appeared to maintain over Harriet's mind; together with the friendship between her and her landlady, Widow Linnore, she resolved to put an end to the intercourse between them, which she deemed so dangerous to the young lady, as well as derogatory to her dignity.

Miss Melville, therefore, determined to return immediately to Scotland, that thus Harriet might be removed beyond the reach of so dangerous an influence, and introduced once more into the society of her former gay associates, who, by their example, or their ridicule, might induce her to renounce her extravagant notions.

And thus, we behold Harriet, in a very different and distant scene, from that calm seclusion from the world, in which she had lately passed so many happy days.

She was now once more in the gay and busy metropolis of Scotland. But how changed was her character from what it had formerly been!

How different were the feelings with which she revisited her former beloved and chosen abode ! How changed was her situation with respect to her friends ! How different the welcome with which she was received !

She was now in a manner alone in the world. She was separated from her sister—reproached by Miss Melville—neglected by her relations—estranged from her friends ; yea, she was the object of their scorn, and the butt of their ridicule. Nothing was spared, neither laugh nor jest—neglect nor contempt, in order to reclaim the once gay and brilliant Harriet from her dangerous delusion.

Her former associates now stood aloof. Her acquaintance or friendship apparently was not to be desired. She was slighted or scorned, where she had been esteemed and honoured. There seemed, in short, to be no one in the wide world around her, with whom she could share her feelings or affections, and none who would permit her to participate in theirs.

Harriet was deeply wounded at this cruel conduct of her friends ; for although she had expected, and was partly prepared for much opposition, her sensitive soul felt her afflictions to be painfully severe. Still, notwithstanding

all that she suffered—and none could feel more keenly—more intensely, she experienced a peace of mind—a holy satisfaction, a measure of sweet communion with Heaven, which the world could not give, and which it could not take away.

The first attempt of Miss Melville was to introduce Harriet again into the society of her former companions ; and her young friend was at length so far induced by her commands and solicitations, as to mingle once more in some of the gay and social scenes, which, it was hoped, would quickly regain their influence over her.

Harriet was not happy, however, in such a situation. She could take but little interest—she could feel but little satisfaction in the sights and sounds around her. Her heart was alien to the gairish scene. The voice of conscience, “terrible though soft,” whispered reproof ; and her spirit languished under a painful sense of separation from her God.

She therefore determined, cost what it might, to relinquish at once all sinful conformity to the world—to make a full surrender of her heart to the Lord, and to devote her whole life to the glory of God.

But this point was not attained without a severe struggle. She was grieved to occasion pain and disappointment to any whom she loved, and would willingly have conceded every thing to their wishes, not inconsistent with her exalted sense of religious duty.

Her relatives, also, still retaining some interest in her welfare, maintained a high degree of authority over her—evinced the strongest opposition to the foolish notions which they conceived, she had imbibed—used their utmost influence to counteract or remove them; and, in short, endeavoured by every method which their ingenuity could invent, whether of reasoning—of ridicule—of cold indifference, or of cruel scorn, to exhibit to her view the sad delusion so fatal to her prospects, both at home and abroad.

Her friends, however, at last grew weary and disgusted, and desisted from their attempts to influence her mind, deeming her resolution nothing else than a foolish display of obstinacy and extravagance, strengthened by the opposition presented, as well as the importance attached to it. They therefore determined to treat her with the utmost contempt—to leave her to her folly—to the state of dependence

which she had courted ; and to the full enjoyment of her enthusiasm and extravagance, for the sake of which she had sacrificed so much.

It would have been well for Harriet, had Miss Melville's share in the common strife terminated so harmlessly. But, alas ! her proud spirit was not so easily vanquished. Nothing, in fact, could equal her disappointment and rage, at the total failure of her final resource. Though considerably advanced in the journey of life, pride and ambition still reigned in her breast. But now all her fondly cherished hopes of honour and distinction in the world were destroyed :—Oh ! how her heart repelled this unwelcome conviction !

Bitterly did she lament the sacrifice which she had made for the sake of her ungrateful charge ; and often and deeply she regretted that she had not accompanied Eleanor to India, and left the incorrigible Harriet to her fate.

She appeared indeed to be implacably offended ; nor relaxed in the least degree the severity of her treatment, till her unwearied persecution became almost insupportable ;—till Harriet at last would fervently wish, that her oft-repeated threat of following Eleanor to

India, were put in execution ; and so completely alienated were her affections from her, that she even looked forward to her departure, as one of the greatest deliverances which could possibly occur.

Nevertheless, though her naturally quick temper would often have inclined her to receive Miss Melville's taunts or reproaches, with warmth of feeling, yet she was generally enabled to bear them with much mildness and heavenly meekness. And this formed such a contrast to her former irritability, that even Miss Melville might at length have been softened, if not subdued, under its gentle and benign influences, had she not unfortunately ascribed the change rather to meanness of spirit, than to what it really was—a severe and constant exercise of self-control.

Poor Harriet ! all the best feelings of her heart were wounded—her sweetest sympathies of soul outraged—her noblest principles despised, and her whole conduct regarded with an evil and suspicious eye. She had no satisfaction, no happiness, no consolation, save in her Bible—in pouring out her heart at the mercy-seat, into the bosom of her Lord—in striving to obtain a higher measure of holy communion

with her Father and her God, as well as a richer supply of the graces of the Spirit, enabling her to advance in her Christian career, and to meet with fortitude, and calm resignation, the various trials and afflictions of her lot.

This source of comfort never failed her. Here she enjoyed strong—abundant—everlasting consolation ! Here she experienced the happiness—the exalted blessedness of waiting on the Lord !

In the hour of deepest trial, and amid the wreck of all our earthly expectations, and beneath the bitterest pangs of disappointed feeling, or blighted hope, or chilled affection—ah ! there is nothing can sustain the sinking heart, or cheer the saddened soul, or pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit, but an interest in the Saviour—in the communications of his love, and the participation of his fulness. It is this that brightens the cloud-clad sky—beautifies the shaded aspect of nature—smooths the rugged path of life—sweetens the bitter cup of sorrow—stills the tumults of the agitated soul—blends amid the earth's fell desolations, the soft and cheering rays of heavenly hope—writes upon the heart,

with the brightness of a sunbeam, the sweet solace of its manifold and agonizing griefs !

Though Harriet's trials might be light when compared with the trials of many others—yet had she not endured the pang of separation ? And was she not enduring still the deep secret sorrow of heart arising from the accumulated load of unmerited reproach ? And were not all these griefs poignant enough for the first stages of her young existence ?

Yes : but the blessed hope of the Gospel sustained her—the full consolations of the Spirit cheered her ; and her soul was kept in perfect peace, in the midst of her manifold trials. She viewed her afflictions in connection with the glory to be revealed ; which is the only consoling light in which we can behold them. Moments there might be, of sadness and gloom, when solemn impressions of the presence of God—vivid discoveries of the essential holiness of his nature—of the glories of his character—of the purity, perfection, and spirituality of his law ; a deep growing conviction of remaining depravity—of the evil of sin—of the deceitfulness of the heart—of the power of temptation—all—all combined, would occasionally shed their sombre influence over

her mind, filling it with gloom and despondency.

But these moments of darkness and sorrow would, ever and anon, be cheered and illuminated by consoling views of the glory of the only Begotten of the Father—the first-born among many brethren—the sinner's friend—the saint's dependence—the glory of their brightest days—the radiance of their darkest nights;—the bright and morning star, gilding from afar the gloomy horizon, and pouring his sweet beams—his rays of soft effulgence over the dim and distant future!

These vivid displays of Divine mercy and majesty, subdued the strength of her earthly fears—scattered the clouds of her earthly sorrows, and illumined the long and dusky vista of futurity, which opened to her troubled and anxious view.

She thus advanced in the hallowed walks of purity and bliss, finding no limits to the richness and strength, fulness and freeness of the blessings of salvation. Her natural enthusiasm, and warmth of disposition, which had formerly given force to her wild, wayward, and unfettered fancy, were now tempered, regulated, and subdued by the spirit of truth, and the power of the gospel.

Through the influence of the nobler hopes—the higher and holier principles of religion, she gradually felt less disturbed by the powerful turbulence of her domestic trials; and she now learned to mourn less than she had formerly done, that the earth afforded her so few objects, upon which she might lavish the warm feelings of her frank, open, and affectionate heart.

Miss Melville, at length, somewhat softened by the unchanging sweetness of Harriet's temper, and even in some measure awed by the quiet dignity with which she received her scorn and reproach, relaxed a little of her harshness towards her, and appeared reconciled to what could not be remedied. And although she never ceased complaining of the hardness of her fate, she would sometimes condescend to address her in the words of kindness and conciliation.

How Harriet rejoiced at the change, trifling and often transient as it was! But time, which is the healer of disappointment and sorrow, lent, though not until several changeful years had passed away, its kind and soothing aid, to remove the chagrin that had preyed so long on the mind of Miss Melville.

CHAPTER XXVI.

· All may choose their 'own path in life; but who can tell to where that path may lead?"

A FEW fleeting years had rolled down the stream of time, involving in their rapid revolution many an eventful change.

In the gradual developement of the page of human life—the history of experience, it will invariably be found that the path of man, in a greater or less degree, is thorny and difficult, though it often seems, when seen from afar, to be smooth and sweet, all strewn with flowers, and bedecked with roses:—that his earthly course is often dark and stormy, though the sun of human happiness may outwardly appear to illumine it, with an unbedimmed and unchequered lustre.

In taking, then, a passing survey of the short, but eventful history of man, we at last—but yet too quickly, arrive at the sad and deeply painful conclusion, that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.”

The countenance that beamed with the morning bloom of youth, and the noonday tide of beauty, and all the gathering glories of prospective felicity, is often, it may be, at no distant period, overshadowed by the ruthless storms, and saddened by the cheerless realities of life. The bosom that bounded with high hope and joyous feeling, now haply swells with the smothered sigh—or the heaving groan—or the torturing pang of bitter disappointment. Alas! yes;—how often have we seen, the fairest faces early marred by the dark traces of deep and corroding sorrow! How often have we seen the glad soul saddened—the glowing spirit quenched—the buoyant heart arrested, in its free full tide of feeling, and the visions of felicity that danced before the eye of the enraptured imagination, surrendering their gay and flattering promise, before the potent touch of sage experience, or the dark realities of the “vale of tears”—“the valley of vicissitude.”

But not to anticipate the shade of life, before its sunshine has yet passed away, let us pause for a moment, and contemplate the scene which now opens to our view. A scene of rural life—of sweet retirement—of verdant beauty—replete with pleasing images of tranquil happiness; where the rich and glowing landscape presents to the eye, the fair face of nature, in all its vast and varied loveliness.

It was a clear and quiet evening, towards the latter end of June, so still, serene, and cloudless, that all things seemed to acknowledge the influence of the peaceful and perfect seclusion, in which Nature here had veiled herself. The oppressive heat of the day had mellowed down to the most delicious softness, and the calm, cooling breeze of eventide, now played among the verdant leaves—now mingled with the climbing clusters of roses, that overshadowed the windows of a pretty, unassuming country-mansion, which stood in retiring modesty, half-hid from passing observation by the row of tall poplars, that skirted the smooth little lawn which stretched in front.

This sweet rural residence, however, we

have seen before. But only once—and that a parting glimpse : when it was just about to be relinquished, all its sweetness untasted and its beauty unenjoyed, for the gayer and the busier scenes of city life.

The name of that pretty secluded habitation, was Green Vale. It was the sweet spot, where the orphan sisters had passed many happy days of their childhood and youth. But how we should return to it, after having forsaken it apparently for ever, remains yet to be unfolded.

And now, through the open casement of that little ground parlour, which looks out, as if complacently, upon the small but rich parterre of blooming and beautiful flowers, immediately before it—let us observe the two ladies who are sitting within, each at the opposite side of the little work-table, engaged in thoughtful and earnest conversation.

The one is a person of lady-like and dignified demeanour ; but with whom the lapse of time has not apparently had gentle dealings. The expression of her face, at the present moment, seemed uneasy and unhappy.

The other is young—yet not very young,—with a fine and graceful form—an ineffable

sweetness of expression, and a mild loveliness of face ; but with a deep sadness that mingles with her beauty, and shades her benignity, ill according with the placid dark-blue eye, brightly beaming from beneath the few fair tresses, so simply arranged upon her meek but open brow.

She holds a letter in her hand, and from her musing and deeply thoughtful attitude, it would seem as if this silent object had some share in her own saddened cast of countenance, and in the grave and agitated looks of her companion.

But who are they whom we thus behold ? And why the dark tinge of melancholy on that sweet gentle face, when every thing around was so cheerful and so happy ! the air so soft and balmy—the trees so full in foliage—the flowers so rich and fragrant—the sky so blue and splendid, and the whole aspect of nature so smiling and serene ?

Reader, listen :—

“ Ah ! then, poor Eleanor !” said the younger lady, in a melancholy and thoughtful tone, “ is this your experience of perfect felicity !—this, your cup of unmingled joy !—this, the realization of your gay and flattering

hopes!—this, your world of splendour, and your mine of wealth! Alas! what a poor exchange for the sweetness of home and its social sympathies; for early endearment and its ardent affections; for Divine truth and its blessed enjoyments! for celestial hope and its purifying influences!”

“Nonsense! my child!” was the tart reply; “Eleanor, blessed above measure by the world’s abundance, cannot appreciate the fulness of her felicity, and this is the cause of all her unhappiness.”

“Dear Miss Melville,” returned Harriet; for of course the parties, by this time, will be recognised; “how can you talk so?—Only listen to what she says: ‘That her bodily affliction is only surpassed by her mental distress.’ ‘That to see us once more, would form the summit of her earthly happiness.’ Now, are not these words pregnant with a painful meaning? The mind, it is true, cannot be cheerful, when the frame is borne down with weakness or disease. But Eleanor is not always ill in health—yet her spirits are always low and desponding. And why does she feel *our* loss so deeply? Ah! she has none, it would seem, to supply our place in her affec-

tionate heart! Her husband—does she ever speak of his attention and regard?—or of the pleasure which his society affords her?—or of the solace which his kindness yields her?”

“Nay, Harriet,” interposed Miss Melville, “she often speaks of Mr. Sidney.”

“Yes—I grant it; but only incidentally, and never with affection, esteem, or cordiality. Ah! my poor Elcanor, I greatly fear that this is the cause—the chief, perhaps the only cause, of your ill-concealed unhappiness!”—She paused, and a troubled expression gathering on the countenance of her anxious auditor, seemed to indicate her silent assent to what she had heard. “Yes, Miss Melville,” repeated Harriet, with sad earnestness, “it surely must strike you, that something is wrong?”

“No—not at all,” said the other resolutely, as if determined to admit nothing that she could possibly avoid; “there is no *must* in the matter. It is only when you raise doubts in my mind, and darken with your gloomy suggestions, the bright side of every thing, that my thoughts are overshadowed with sadness.”

“Ah! Miss Melville,” was the deeply feel-

ing reply, "how can you think that I would divest the picture of Eleanor's life, of aught of its brightness, beauty, and sweetness! my own—my only sister!"

"Nay, I beg your pardon. I cannot accuse you of want of love to Eleanor:—far from it. I only mean to say, that you have an unfortunate habit of putting an unfavourable meaning on many things that happen, which they cannot bear. I speak in candour."

"Well, then," said Harriet, in a quick impressive tone, that struck forcibly upon the heart of her companion; "tell me, in candour, do you really think Eleanor quite as happy, as her worldly circumstances are fortunate and prosperous?"

"Why *should* she be unhappy?" replied Miss Melville, dexterously eluding the question; "What *can* make her unhappy? Her husband of the highest rank; with immense wealth and large possessions! Does she not herself say that she lives in a princely mansion—in a paradise of beauty—in the midst of splendour and affluence? Has she not every thing that can please the eye, or gratify the taste, or brighten her lot? And has she not two children—the loveliest of the lovely!"

What then can make her unhappy?" said Miss Melville, pausing and looking around her with pride and triumph.

"Yes," said Harriet, gravely, "she has all that you say. But true felicity can never be measured by the extent and goodliness of earthly possession. In the midst of the fulness of all created things—Eleanor is not happy. There is a worm at the root of her beautiful overshadowing gourd. Gall and wormwood are mingled together in her golden cup, tainting—embittering—poisoning all its delicious sweetness! There is something, I fear, even beyond the common vanity and worthlessness of earthly objects! The brightest tinselling of the imagination cannot gloss it over, or conceal it from the searching eye of anxious affection. Alas! it is too painfully evident!"

"How is it evident?—I am sure, I can see no indications of such pungent sorrow and bitter disappointment as you describe. Pray, point them out;—your discernment is far superior to mine," said Miss Melville, endeavouring to speak in a light and sportive tone of voice.

"How is it evident?" repeated Harriet. "I will tell you. I am led to this conclu-

sion, painful though it be, from a thousand little, remote, incidental allusions, which have dropped from Eleanor's pen, in the course of correspondence;—minute and trifling, when considered individually, but sad and affecting, when viewed together in a gloomy heap. A very large portion of the cup of sorrow is filled up of minor evils, which, when singled out and numbered one by one, are not of much importance. But when beheld collectively—rising in close and sad succession, they form a weighty mass of misery, and quickly constitute a vast amount of human suffering. Now, listen to a few of the half-uttered sorrows, that throw their shadows over the sunshine of Eleanor's life. Perhaps she designed to utter no complaint. The sigh which she heaved, was heard perhaps by none. The tear that started and glistened in her eye, suffusing her pale cheek, and dropping on her pen, might, perhaps, have been beheld by no human being. But can I not perceive in almost every letter which she has sent, the whisperings of her unhappiness—the breathings of her sorrow? Listen, Miss Melville, to what she says, evidently under strong feelings of depression:—
' Her gay dreams of bliss are vanished.' ' In-

dia is no longer the bright fairy realm of her youthful imaginations.' 'The heat is intense—the burning winds sweep over the earth with enervating strength.' 'Her own health sinking rapidly beneath it.' 'Society not congenial to her habits or desires.' 'Her children delicate—drooping in the very morning of their days.' 'Her husband engaged—incessantly engaged—seldom at home—no time for domestic enjoyment.' Alas! alas! this, I dread, is the sting of her unhappiness! She does not say so. No;—she never blames him—she has never breathed a complaint against him, even in the ears of a beloved and only sister. Still, I cannot help my fears, that Mr. Sidney is more highly favoured with the gifts of fortune, than with excellency of character and kindness of heart."

"Come—come, Harriet," interrupted Miss Melville; "practise your own precept—be charitable!"

"And then again," said Harriet, following the train of her reflections, without seeming to have noticed the preceding injunction; "there is my uncle—unapproachable—interred in his stately mansion—wrapt round with the mantle of his grandeur; so dignified and

reserved—so intrenched in ceremony, and absorbed in splendour—so anxious for honour—so forgetful of God! Alas! poor Eleanor! She seems to have no companionship with any one, in that strange and distant land! No sympathies—no thoughts—no feelings, responding to hers, and compensating the absence of a sister's love! The fond affections of her heart are restrained, and the gentle overflowings of her sensitive soul, meet with no return. Alas! my poor Eleanor!"

"Stop, Harriet, stop," said Miss Melville, sharply; "you have said quite enough. Do not accumulate more evils. Let your inventive faculties now rest."

"Well, time will either verify my suspicions, or falsify them. I pray God, that all my dark forebodings may never be realized."

A long pause now ensued, neither of the two seeming disposed to hazard any further expression of their feelings on the subject. Miss Melville busily plied her needle; whilst Harriet, resting her forehead on her hand, in the attitude of deep thought, seemed unconscious of every outward object, save a small gold enamelled case, containing the miniature portrait of a very beautiful child of about four

or five years of age, which lay on the table before her.

And this, indeed, from the earnestness with which she regarded it, and from the look of intense interest depicted in her expressive countenance, appeared now to occupy the principal place in her pensive meditations.

At length, raising her head, and holding the miniature in a more advantageous light, she exclaimed with much feeling,

“And this is Eleanor’s child!—my sister’s child! Sweet innocent! how often have I longed to see you! how often have I talked of you—thought of you—dreamed of you! Sweet—sweet little Emily Sidney! Oh! what a lovely countenance!”—and she gazed upon the mute and motionless image with admiring fondness.

“Beautiful indeed!” responded Miss Melville, beholding the portrait with admiration; “beautiful indeed! she promises one day even to surpass her mother in loveliness!”

“Yet,” said the other, sadly, “I should have been satisfied with less beauty, for more of the rosiness of health. Ah! does not that delicate loveliness touchingly tell of the sultry clime of the land of her birth? Look at those blue

eyes, beaming far too brightly through their long silken lashes—and that pale polished brow—and that finely chiselled chin—and that slender, swan-like little neck, with the rich golden curls hanging all about it—and that cheek so slightly, yet so exquisitely tinged with beautiful vermilion—it seems so drooping—so lovely! there is scarcely any room for a single one of childhood's smiling dimples! Ah! what a cast of strange, ethereal beauty beams around the whole! It would seem, to my fancy's eye, as if the spirit of the fragile tenement, were lingering, loath to withdraw from so lovely a shrine, yet, all the while, stealing imperceptibly away to a higher and purer realm of existence! Alas! I tremble for the doating parent of that fair child! What—oh! what, if her idol were removed! But I cannot think of it.—To thee, O Lord, I leave it. Do, as it seemeth good to thy adorable sovereignty—thine infinite wisdom—thy rich and boundless goodness!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

“ Well, thou hast tried it—thou hast closely seen
What greatness has without it, and within ;
Where now the joyful expectation?—fled !
The strong anticipating spirit?—dead !”

Crabbe.

HARRIET had never been satisfied with her sister's marriage : for almost the very first accounts which she received from Eleanor, after a few month's residence in India, brought the intelligence, that she had entered into this, the most important of all earthly connections, nearly without, as her own words playfully but truly expressed, “ the trouble of serious consideration.”

From this light and thoughtless spirit, and

the haste and rashness, with which this union had been formed, Harriet was naturally led to the inevitable, though painful conclusion, that although highly advantageous in many respects, it was more a compact of money and interest, than a solemn engagement, in which mutual affection and esteem had been the impelling motives. And various circumstances subsequently contributed to confirm this opinion.

Eleanor, during the first year of her marriage, appeared always anxious, in her communications with her sister, to impress upon her mind a high idea of her greatness in the world ; the rank and distinction to which she had attained, and the wealth and grandeur with which she was surrounded.

She would frequently enumerate her sources of felicity ; or proudly allude to the varied charms, and unnumbered excellencies of her exalted situation. Her magnificent habitation—her rich fields—her gorgeous gardens—her luxuriant plantations—her host of menials and obsequious attendants, would ever form the subjects of delighted description ; and she would portray, with a pen of fervid eloquence—with a poet's beaming eye,—or a painter's

glowing pencil, all the beauties and splendours of the rich eastern Eden which was now her happy home.

But as years advanced, and cares increased ; as troubles thickened and sorrows gathered, Eleanor's greatness seemed gradually to sink from its airy exaltation. The splendours which surrounded her, began to lose their brightness !—the power of which she boasted, appeared divested of its charm ;—the fields she called her own, had lost their bloom and richness ; and the smiling landscape, the shady arbours, and the lovely flowers of her earthly paradise, were stripped of their beauty, and divested of their fragrance.

In fact, to an early period after her marriage—too early, alas !—could be traced the gradual decline of her first high tone of happiness and gratified ambition, till at last it gave place to deep, frequent, and querulous repinings.

She exulted no longer over her sister, and the lowlier condition of life she had chosen. She would sometimes even confess that she frequently longed for the calm seclusion of her tranquil existence. She would sometimes complain of the unceasing stir of the scene in

which she moved—the bustle of the world in which she was obliged continually to mingle.

She would sometimes speak of the powerful influence of the eastern sun—the fatal insalubrity of the climate, which had so deeply debilitated her frame; and then feelingly contrast it with the gentle air—the cooling breezes, of a fresher, fairer clime, which she was destined never more to behold! If she happened to allude to her riches or her rank, it was only to express her anxious desire for the peaceful enjoyment of one care-unburdened hour. In short, a sense of pleasure seldom seemed to pervade her saddened mind, except perhaps when she spoke with kindling affection of her children—her loved, her lovely children!

But even this was not an unmingled source of satisfaction. They were beautiful, sweet, and engaging, but they were so drooping—so delicate, that she was in constant anxiety and alarm, lest they should sink beneath the intenseness of the baneful and unhealthy climate.

“Poor Eleanor!” would Harriet say, with a weeping eye, and an aching heart; “how thickly have the dark clouds gathered over your bright summer sky! Alas! my gentle sister!

how little is her mind formed to bear the bitter pangs of disappointment. Oh! that her sorrows may quickly pass away, and that the Father of mercies would make the sad, but salutary dealings of his providence, the blessed means of promoting her spiritual—her everlasting felicity! Blessed Jesus, let her varied trials wean her heart from the world—conform her to thy holy image—impart a portion of sweet peace of mind, and work out for her an eternal weight of glory.”

Succeeding letters which Harriet received from Eleanor, were still less satisfactory—less cheering; and uniformly discovered a growing despondency of spirit.

And these now became more frequent than ever, as her hopes diminished, and her sorrows increased, and the flight of time seemed to widen the distance between them. It appeared, indeed, to yield an inexpressible relief to Eleanor's wounded spirit, to pour her griefs into the bosom of her affectionate sister, and to meet with the deep sympathy of her feeling soul.

Her murmurings and repinings, however, never assumed either a decided aspect, or a specific form. She seemed to shrink from touching

the main-spring of her affliction. Broken hints—brief allusions—abrupt bursts of feeling—sudden effusions of deep grief, were still the only vague indications of unhappiness. At one time, “she was ill—dispirited—pressed to death with accumulated cares.” At another time “she was unhappy abroad, and miserable at home.”

“Miserable at home!” Harriet sadly exclaimed, “what painful language is this! What a spirit of deep sorrow breathes in the complaint! What a tone of bitter anguish vibrates in the words! Alas! there cannot now be a doubt, but that this is the source of her most poignant affliction. Would that the blight had fallen any where but here—here! my sister, in your own home—in your own heart—in the tenderest part, where the wound is deepest, and the pang is most severe!—Would that your fortune had been humbler, and your home happier, and your portion more congenial to your mild and gentle spirit!—But why should I repine at the appointments of Heaven? Truly, the events of the present transitory scene are not always what they seem to our contracted vision. There is a holy, a wise, an almighty, and a mysterious

arrangement of Providence, overruling and directing the occurrences of life—bringing forth fruit from the barren soil of sorrow—producing fair flowers from the arid wilderness of affliction, and causing sweet blossoms to bud on the scathed and withered tree of disappointment. There is a gracious and merciful hand, mingling and measuring the cup of human woe ; drawing forth sweetness from its deep and bitter dregs, and raising up gladness from the last expiring embers of our lost and ruined hopes ! Yes ;—I know that this is true. Let me not then turn away from the bright paradise beyond, to survey the gloomy intermediate scene, or lament over the trials of the waste howling wilderness through which we must pass to reach the promised land.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me ;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts.”

ELEANOR'S allusions to her domestic unhappiness had commenced about the time of Harriet's return to Green Vale, her former sweet sequestered habitation.

And these painful communications, though very slight at first, continued gradually increasing in undisguised bitterness, till the period when Harriet received the letter which accompanied the present of the portrait of her little stranger niece.

Now, this was the letter which occasioned the saddened expression on Harriet's countenance, which we have noticed in a preceding

chapter : and this was the beautiful miniature which, at the same time, excited the affectionate feelings of her soul.

Eleanor had often before transmitted to her sister magnificent marks of her unfailing affection, and to her also was owing much of the comfort and independence which Harriet and Miss Melville at present enjoyed.

But no former gift had appeared so valuable—none had been so highly prized as this little lovely image. For, in Harriet's fond eye, its intrinsic beauty was enhanced by the touching evidences which it presented, of the fragile form of the beloved original.

The painter's pencil had apparently been true to the life. The surpassing softness and beauty of the little lily countenance, seemed to have received an ethereal touch—a half-beatified expression, as if its young spirit were already on the wing, affectingly corresponding with the description which Eleanor had frequently given of the delicate and seraphic loveliness of this her favourite child.

The painful impression which was thus formed in Harriet's mind, that the sweet little Emily was destined to enjoy but a brief abode on earth, was deepened and strengthened

each successive time she beheld her cherished image.

But alas! she did not know how soon, and how surely, her apprehensions should be verified. The miniature proved, with an affecting coincidence, to be the prophetic forerunner of the painful event which was so sadly anticipated. The sweet floweret drooped—the beautiful blossom died!

She died—but angel-like on earth,
Her death will be a seraph's birth.

Nor was this all. The grave was still unsatisfied. The same letter which brought this afflictive intelligence, contained also an account of the death of her uncle.

Thus Eleanor was visited with a double bereavement—her uncle and her child. The first sudden and unexpected—the last painful and lingering.

Oh! this was a time of the greatest distress to the keenly feeling heart of the affectionate Harriet, both on account of the heavy stroke of death so painfully repeated, and also on account of the deep despondency of mind—the bitter anguish of heart, which pervaded the whole of her sister's letter. *

Eleanor, indeed, appeared almost overwhelmed with her wild and frantic woe. The death of her child seemed to open at last the flood-gates of all her other long-hidden sorrows. "Grief—desolation—broken-heartedness" was the whole burden of her tale—"had been the whole portion of her life."

And now her best blessing had been removed—her child—her beautiful, her dearly beloved, her fondly cherished child; the idol of her heart—the solace of her soul—her guardian angel, attending and illumining the steps of her dark and weary pilgrimage through life—her only companion through years of long desertion, when her heart's best feelings had been wounded and despised—her only earthly comfort in the midst of much and deeply-felt affliction.—Alas! she, too, was gone from her for ever!

Her bitter complainings were even mingled with open repinings at the providence of God, and Harriet beheld, with the deepest sorrow, the murmurings which she uttered in the midst of her afflictions. "She had borne many manifestations of the displeasure of Heaven." Providence had marked her as the object of its wrath. Why could she doubt it? Did

not every thing testify it? Her very sweetness was made bitter—her good was made evil. Her elevated rank only marked her pre-eminence in misery. Wealth and honour had been treasured in her store—but bitter disappointment was her daily portion, and sorrow the constant companion of her paths. Alas! her riches and exalted rank had been the sources of her wretchedness. Yes; why should she now seek to conceal it?—they had tempted the cupidity of one of the most worthless of men, who had rendered her whole life sad and miserable.

These words were made emphatic, and Harriet, in the sorrow of her heart, wept long and bitterly, when this plain confirmation of her worst suspicions, was given. “And then,” said Eleanor, continuing her lamentations, “there was her uncle—her poor uncle—alas! his death rendered the stroke doubly severe: For although the casting of her sad lot in life might be chiefly attributed to his influence, yet when he afterwards became better acquainted with the character of him whom he had chosen for her husband, he saw, and lamented the error committed, and did every thing in his power to repair the injury he had occasioned; and even became more kind and

attentive, in proportion to the neglect and unkindness of the other."

Here some lines followed which had been half blotted out, as if the unhappy and afflicted writer had wished something more to be revealed—yet shrunk from the disclosure. But even through her own fast-falling tears, and the half-formed erasures, Harriet could trace the painfully expressive words: "The only restraint —— my husband —— blush —— the painful past —— the hopeless future."

What painful disclosures were these! Harriet almost sunk beneath the blow. What complicated affliction of mind; what inexpressible bitterness of soul did she not experience! It indeed required the full exercise of her strongest confidence in the Father of mercies, to enable her to submit without a murmur or complaint, to his adorable sovereignty, his unerring wisdom, in these trying and mysterious dispensations of his providence.

But it was very difficult, even with all her high sense of religion, and exalted views of the character of God, to bring her mind to holy resignation to the divine disposal. Again and again she was obliged to look for strength and consolation far beyond herself—beyond creat-

ed help—beyond this spot of earth, and little speck of time—even to God himself, before she found her mind fully reconciled to the corrections of his hand ; or perfectly acquiescing in holy silence and devout submission, to his fatherly infliction, as the fittest and the best for promoting her spiritual and everlasting advantage.

Even Miss Melville shared largely in her sorrow. Her spirit failed within her when she spoke or thought of Eleanor. “ Poor—poor Eleanor ! Could they not yet persuade her to return to Green Vale, which care had never visited—where sorrow was unknown ? ”

Alas ! it was too late. The wound had been inflicted which earth could not cure. Eleanor was now the victim of her deep consuming grief. And Miss Melville recollected with agonizing bitterness, the powerful influence which she had exerted in urging her unfortunate charge to her dark and afflicted fate.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“ Oh ! Thou who dry’st the mourner’s tear,
 How dark this world would be
 If when deceived and wounded here
 We could not fly to Thee !

* * * *

..... Thou wilt heal the broken heart,
 Which, like the plants that throw
 Their fragrance from the wounded part,
 Breathes sweetness out of woe.”

Moore.

OTHER years passed by, but as they passed, brought to the inmates of Green Vale, little alleviation of grief or anxiety respecting their beloved Eleanor.

She was still in India, and still unhappy.

although time had shed its healing influence over the wound inflicted on her heart, by the death of her beautiful little Emily. The kindness of Heaven had still spared one child—a lovely boy, and her affections were transferred with almost double strength, to this single blessing which remained amid the wreck of her felicity.

How often—how earnestly, during this long period, had Harriet wished for her sister's return to her earliest peaceful home, and, perhaps, to the enjoyment of a portion at least of her earliest happiness;—and ardently she breathed her wishes and her hopes, in fervent supplications to the Hearer of prayer, that he would in mercy spare the rod—heal the wound which he had inflicted—bind up the heart which his providence had broken, and restore to her dearest Eleanor, the genial, consoling influence of the Holy Spirit;—that she might once more return to the enjoyment of the sweet hopes of the Gospel—to all the endearments of a kind heavenly Father's love, and even to the blessing of soft domestic peace in the bosom of her friends.

And although the difficulties seemed insuperable in the way of this fondly wished-for

result, before another year had winged its rapid flight, in the providence of God, it came to be accomplished.

The tenure of life in the bright regions of the East, is feeble and uncertain. The sun that arises upon an active and vigorous frame, may yet, in his decline, or even in his noon-day course, behold it levelled with its kindred dust. The balmy eve that closes around some happy group, fondly exercising all the social charities of life, and all the tenderest ties of love—brothers, sisters, lovers, friends, haply before its brief flight be finished, and its shadows merged into the faintest dawn of the first rosy morn, may behold some gay, and lovely, and beloved one, silent in the stillness of death: •

Thus suddenly, thus unexpectedly, did the unsparing hand of death cut down the husband of the hapless Eleanor. Yet this event, though it promised to release her from many bitter woes, her gentle heart could not refuse sincerely to bewail. Ah! who could deny the tribute of a sigh to the memory of the dead? Who could recal, in the face of a departed mortal, his full array of folly and of faults? . The frown of anger is no longer on

the pale cadaverous brow ;—the smile of scorn has passed away from the colourless, contracted lip. The words of unkindness are heard no more. The stern eyes are closed in death ;—their haughty and unfeeling glance no longer wounds the soul. Calm is that bosom where the hurricane of passion once arose, to rend the finest feelings of the heart, and scatter all the loveliest charms of love ! Who, then, would not drop a tear at the dread, quiet scene of death ?

But although Eleanor wept at the sight of death, they were not such tears, as she had shed at the sight of death before. She mourned the sudden, the premature stroke, that had hurried his unprepared spirit into an eternal world : But her sorrow did not flow from the hallowed recollection of the fond affections—the sweet sympathies—the lovely relations of the husband, the father, and the friend.

These, alas ! she had never experienced ;—for even in her own home, and in the midst of her own family, Eleanor's heart had been the heart of a stranger. The care that should have shielded, and the kindness which should have cherished, she had never enjoyed ; and the arm which should have brought protection, had only

desolated her domestic felicity. Her grief, therefore, though perfectly sincere, could not be supposed to be either deep or lasting.

With what feelings of mingled pain and gladness did Harriet receive the intelligence of her sister's last affliction, and of her intended return to her native land !

The settlement of the affairs of her deceased husband, was stated by Eleanor to be the only circumstance which delayed her immediate departure from India. These necessary arrangements, however, she expected would soon be completed.

Mr. Sidney's large private property was to remain in the hands of executors, for the behoof of his son during his minority, which, on account of his delicate health, as well as for the benefit of his education, was to be passed with his mother in Britain : whilst Eleanor's portion of the earth's riches consisted of the almost princely fortune of her late uncle, which had been settled upon herself and heirs, independently of her husband.

And here we may notice, what perhaps we ought to have mentioned before, that as Harriet had never been restored to her uncle's favour, nor had ever been honoured during his

life-time, by the most distant notice, so she received at his death no token of his regard in the disposal of his fortune. But she had no reason to feel this as a severe disappointment ; for the kind munificence of her sister had anticipated almost every desire of her heart, and had placed her not only in independence, but even in affluence.

The next letter from Eleanor announced her immediate embarkation for England.

“And now,” she said, “the moment—the long wished-for moment is arrived, when I shall at last, and for ever, bid adieu to this fatal land. Oh ! that my foot had never pressed its hated soil, and that the mantle of oblivion could now be cast over it for ever. But what is past cannot be recalled—yet can never be forgotten. Yes, my dearest sister, now, after many years of unutterable suffering in body and in mind, I hasten to embrace you.—I hasten once more to be blessed with the sight of my dear native land. Bereft of health and happiness ; enervated—languid—drooping—dying ; changed in every thing, but love to you, say, then, my best beloved, can you receive and cherish this wreck of all that once was, and feel towards me all your first affec-

tion—all your wonted love? Yes,—I am assured of it; and though time may have faded my cheek, and tears dimmed my eye, and sorrow wrinkled my brow, and anguish mingled, prematurely indeed, my locks with grey, yet, I know, that these will work no change in you, nor chill your feelings, nor estrange your heart, nor turn away the current of your warm affections. What gladness this blends with my sorrow, and mingles with my wretchedness, to think that there are still the breathings of sympathy in the hearts of those I love: and the accents of kindness, in pleasant dreams, cheering me on the way,—and a happy welcome awaiting me in the home of my youth! Sweet Green Vale! shall my eyes yet behold your well-remembered plains? Shall my heart yet be gladdened by your calm familiar scenes, so long and fondly cherished in my thoughts? Peace! happiness! shall I taste you yet again? Shall the wounded heart find healing, and the weary soul repose? Oh! what a thrill of joy shoots through my troubled breast!—But now, listen, my dearest sister,” she continued, as if she could no longer refrain from expressing some of the overflowing feelings of her soul, —“listen, my dearest sister, to what I now

reveal of the state of my mind during my long night of affliction. You remember the period when the beams of heavenly truth first shone into our minds? Ah! that was an important time to me. I can never forget it! True, indeed, the vivid impressions vanished for a time—the vain visions of the world danced before my eyes; and I yielded to the charm of the vile enchanter. I left my God; alas! I deeply sinned. But the Lord followed me in love, and urged me to repentance, by the sweet calls of divine mercy, as well as by the stern voice of divine providence, which was breathed in the calm, thundered in the whirlwind, and borne in upon my soul, on the wings of the tempest. That dreadful storm that expended its fury on my hapless head in my passage to India, was the first thing that aroused me to a sense of my dangerous decline. But, I sunk once more beneath the power of temptation—my feeble strength yielded again to its potent influence—my foolish heart clung to the fascinations of the world; sin triumphed, and grace languished. But I was indulging a deceitful dream—I was embracing an empty cloud—I was grasping at a fleeting shadow—I was resting my hopes on the baseless fabric of

a vision ! Merciful warnings were still vouchsafed ;—but all in vain—till at length I was roused by a continued series of deep and enduring afflictions. Oh ! who can conceive the anguish of that dread waking ! How my soul was made to bleed ! how the tenderest feelings of my heart were wrung ! Blow after blow came thickly upon me—my vain hopes were levelled with the dust. * * *

And now, wounded—bleeding—dying, I am left to reflect on my folly—to behold the wonders of his holy providence—to adore the kind hand that smote me, and to contemplate anew the infinite value, and the eternal efficacy, of the shed blood of the Redeemer. Many a gloomy cloud has lowered above me ; many a lurid day has passed over me, and many a fierce storm has burst upon my head :—yet throughout all I can still trace the leadings of a divine hand—the workings of infinite mercy, and the wonders of infinite love. I can still perceive a constant stream of heavenly light, irradiating the darkness of my path, and diffusing its power and brightness over my soul. The providence of God has guided by footsteps in ways that I knew not—in paths that I have not known. His holy word has been a light to

my feet and a lamp to my path—his Holy Spirit has not ceased to be my kind admonisher ; breathing on the dry bones—purifying the heart by his sweet, celestial influence—transforming the soul into his holy image, and promoting a closer communion with my Father and my God. And thus, by the Spirit, and the word, and the providence of God, I have been wisely and wonderfully conducted ; and by a course of severe but needed affliction, He has graciously, I trust, in some measure prepared me for his service on earth, and his glory in heaven. Oh ! that I may receive strength out of the fulness of the strength and grace treasured up for us in Jesus—and that I may yet have many blessed opportunities of holy intercourse with you, my dearest sister, and that we may yet have much sweet counsel together on the love, grace, and goodness of our common Lord. Adieu—my own—my more than ever beloved sister—adieu ! but not, I trust, for ever.—I shall see you yet again on earth. Oh ! what joy—what happiness in the thought !”

CHAPTER XXX.

"O, welcome as the hall to pilgrim feet,
Ye woods and steeps, breeze, fountain, shade and green.

* * * * *

Home of the sober maid, whose calm retreat
A haven to my shipwrecked bark hath been,
How has my heart oft blessed your friendly screen,
How owned the comfort of your silent seat."

AND now the time of Eleanor's arrival rapidly approached. The season had been favourable, and the winds propitious. A warm welcome, and a kind reception awaited her at Green Vale, and every thing which the minutest attention could foresee, had been prepared for her comfort and accommodation.

Miss Melville had been solicitous that the

whole of her domestic arrangements, should appear seemly in the sight of one so long accustomed to elegance and splendour;—and accordingly the little parlour had been neatly papered, and the rest of the house newly painted from top to bottom. The garden was arranged in the nicest order. The little lawn was smoothly shorn, and looked as green and lovely as a sheet of verdant velvet. The walks were newly gravelled, and the glossy bordering box had been clipped and dressed, till its pristine beauty was almost lost in its acquired neatness.

“ Ah ! why such preparations ?” sighed Harriet to herself : “ these things, I fear, possess few charms to Eleanor now !”

At length one fine sunny day, a short time before Harriet and Miss Melville had purposed setting off, to wait for the arrival of Eleanor at London, and greet her with an unexpected welcome—just as the intended travellers were busily engaged in some little arrangements for their journey, there was heard the rather unusual sound of carriage wheels rustling along the little gravelled lane which led to the dwelling.

Harriet’s heart beat quickly at—she knew

not what ; for she scarcely dared to think it was her sister. She sprung to the window in visible trepidation. " A travelling carriage ! I see a lady within—her head is reclining—her face is covered with her hands ; now she looks out—let me see—is it possible ?—can it be ? Yes—yes—it is Eleanor ! my sister ! it is she !—it is she ! "

" Oh ! Harriet," hurriedly exclaimed Miss Melville, her mind divided betwixt gladness and ceremony ; " stôp, Harriet, I entreat you. Do not be so flurried—assist me with some of these matters out of the way—this table—it is the old oaken one—I intended to have removed it yesterday—and that arm chair,—Oh ! dear ! she is gone !—flighty thing !—what shall I do ? so sudden—and my cap too, all out of sorts—expecting no one—my poor Eleanor ! Is it possible it is she ? Dear child ! is she come at last ? Oh ! dear ! what shall I do ? I am so hurried—such a fright ! If Harriet had only stopt a single moment ——." But we leave Miss Melville in the midst of her bustle and confusion, and hasten to a more interesting part of the scene.

By this time the sisters were fast locked in each other's arms. " Eleanor !—Harriet ! "

burst simultaneously from the lips of both—and then a painful pause succeeded, of deep—troubled—overpowering emotion. For a few moments neither could speak, but they gazed on each other with mute, ardent affection, slowly—stedfastly, as if collecting their courage to meet the overwhelming tide of painful recollection, which now seemed to rush upon their minds.

It was not indeed a time for words. Ah ! what form of speech could have meetly expressed the unutterable feeling of their souls ?

“ ————— the heart

Owens not such weak interpreters ; *there* lies
Feeling, that ties the tongue, and from dimm'd eyes,
Makes tears, more eloquent than speech, to start.”

Fond looks that spoke without a sound—deep sighs that choked their utterance—floods of tears that streamed fast and thick down their cheeks, were the only outward indications of the tumultuous emotions, which swelled within the bosoms of the sisters.

Harriet, however, quickly recovered herself. A few moments of strong mental struggle, were sufficient to enable her to overcome her excessive agitation ; and though the tears still

glistened on her trembling eye-lashes, her voice was calm and clear, and her countenance smiling and serene. She now warmly uttered the affectionate feelings of her heart, and gently led the exhausted, fainting wanderer to the sweet little parlour, which had been the well-remembered scene of younger and happier days.

Eleanor shrunk back as she approached the hallowed spot. What a thousand painful images were here presented to her troubled mind! What a host of bitter feelings did the most insignificant memento of the past, awaken within her breast!

But here Miss Melville hastened to meet them: "My child!—my child!" she exclaimed, "my dearest Eleanor!—a thousand welcomes!" and she pressed her to her heart with the utmost affection.

Eleanor, however, could make no reply. The words died away on her quivering lip. She sunk into a chair, pale, trembling, exhausted, and as if agitated by some powerful but yet unrevealed mental agony. The quick throbbing of her veins could be felt, as she feebly pressed the hands which were fondly clasped in hers; and she could only respond

with a look of deep, yet sorrowful tenderness, to the warmth and the kindness of her reception.

It was indeed peculiarly affecting to see one, in such circumstances as Eleanor, thus moved by the recollection of past scenes of her early history. She would sometimes glance with weeping eyes, around the little apartment—then sink again into an attitude of the deepest anguish, under the strength of the varied and powerful feelings aroused by its touching recognitions. Sometimes a faint flush of colour would rise into her pale countenance—but the next moment it would fade, and leave her paler than before. Once she smiled—and only once—but there was something so sorrowful—so bitter in that hopeless smile, that it excited far more painful feeling, than even the tears which she had shed, or the deep emotion she had displayed. Harriet's heart was ready to burst, as she gazed upon her sister. Oh! indeed she was sadly altered! Sorrow and affliction had already furrowed her cheek—prematurely silvered her hair with grey, and destroyed, with unsparing hand, the elasticity and symmetry of her once-graceful form. How unlike she looked to Eleanor

—the blooming and beautiful Eleanor of former days. What a busy throng of tender, though painful recollections, mingled with the varying thoughts of Harriet's mind, as she regarded her sister, recalling to her memory some of the gladsome scenes of her early life, when she used to bound with her, in their wild young happiness, over the grassy glades which now beheld, themselves unchanged, her premature decay. Ah! what a shadow was here, of the joyousness of childhood and the buoyancy of youth.

And yet still more sorrowful images of the past, arose to Harriet's view. What a contrast did she behold in the drooping, faded, attenuated form before her—the languid hollow eye—the cheek blanched with an almost deadly paleness; and the brow marked with the dark lines of care and sorrow—what a contrast did this wreck of all that was lovely, present to the remembrance of that loveliness itself. The springing step—the sparkling glance—the cheek so full of the rich glow of youth and health—the brow so erect with the pride of life—all as she had seen in her sister's appearance, that fatal eve, which closed its lin-

gering shadows around her departure to a land of deceitful promise.

Harriet's very soul sunk within her, at the sadness of the scene ; for though she had expected to find that the first fresh bloom of her sister's youthful years had fled, and though she had been prepared for change—she was not prepared for a change like this ! Yet she loved her not the less. Oh, no !—but the more ardently, because of the very sad reality of her feebleness, her faded beauty, and her blighted happiness. All the warmth of her affectionate heart—all the tenderness of her sympathizing soul, was expressed in the fervent kiss, which she imprinted on the pallid cheek of the altered Eleanor.

Harriet had been so deeply absorbed in the multitude of her thoughts, feelings, and emotions, that she had till now altogether lost sight of the little stranger nephew, whom she had so long and so anxiously expected with his mother. Strange, that she should have so forgot him !—for, had he not been the subject of her constant delighted conversation ? Had not her mind dwelt with rapture, upon the pleasure which she should experience, in receiving her sister's dear and only child—in

witnessing all his pretty engaging ways—in listening to his innocent gentle prattle? Had she not thought, with unfailing delight, of the sweet task which she should impose upon herself, of being his faithful, unwearied instructress—of aiding to develope the opening powers of his infant mind—of teaching his lisping accents to flow in the sweet artless prayer of childhood—of leading, with Heaven's best blessing on his head, his infant steps into the happy and the hallowed paths of righteousness and peace? Had she not, in short, formed to herself a thousand different delightful plans—yet to be pursued? Had she not presented to her own glowing mind, a long futurity of pure and innocent joys, all centring in this dear, distant object of her love—till often the dreams of her imagination would assume the shape of delightful realities, and she would feel as if already blessed by the enjoyment of what she so fondly anticipated?

It was, therefore, with a considerable feeling of alarm, that she now observed that Eleanor was alone—and remembered, what she had not observed in the excited moment of their first meeting, that she was not accompanied by any one, save a female attendant.

With eager, anxious haste, she began to question her sister on the subject, when she was at once arrested by the peculiar—and sad—and solemn expression, which her countenance displayed, as she turned and gazed on Harriet with a speaking anguish in her eye, that seemed to ask her to read something there, which she dared not trust her feelings to disclose.

Oh! what a look was that;—so full of mournful meaning, and so expressive of silent agony! One dreadful thought flashed with strange rapidity across Harriet's mind, as she beheld it. A cold shuddering sensation stole over her whole frame—not now of apprehended danger—for that was past; but with the certain agonizing conviction—the truth, the terrible belief, of a sad and sudden bereavement.

She clasped her hands in the deep grief of dark unexpected woe, where the scene had just been brightly gilded by anticipated gladness;—and tears of bitter sorrow for the lamented child, mingled with sweet pity, and unutterable tenderness towards the bereaved and afflicted mother, streamed from her eyes, as embracing her, with the most emphatic sympathy—she exclaimed

“It is the will of God!—His will be done. It is best and wisest. Our last—our lovely blossom, then, is gone!—Our little Louis is in heaven!”

Eleanor’s only answer was a fresh burst of tears. But she lifted up her eyes to heaven, and, even amid the deep anguish depicted on her countenance, there was blended a beautiful expression of chastened resignation to the will of God, which seemed to breathe forth the fervent “amen,” which her lips refused to utter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“He builds too low, who builds his hopes beneath the
skies.”

WE enter upon life with a light step, and a happy heart. The path beneath is smooth and pleasant—the earth around is gay and verdant—the sky above is cloudless and serene—and the beautiful prospect of futurity, stretching far beyond the eye’s widest compass, seems bathed in the radiance of perpetual sunshine.

The dread of disappointment never disturbs us—never obtrudes, to sully the pure lustre and loveliness of the scene. The thought of sorrow, of anguish, or of pain, never mingles with the gay throng of pleasant dreams, in which our fancy is luxuriating.

“ Sweet rays
From life’s pure source of light, come soft to kiss
Flowers, that again breathe out imparted bliss.”

But—alas ! the green herbage of the earth sometimes conceals beneath its smiling verdure, the poisonous serpent. A morn of tranquil brightness is often succeeded by the thick gloom of an impending storm. The loveliest day that ever smiled on a glad world, is at best, of short duration. The radiant sun, as if jealous of his own broad display of beauty and brilliancy, hastens to hide his glories in the far sinking west, and steals quickly into his sombre couch, wrapping the earth in midnight darkness.

We sometimes enjoy a prosperous career. We mingle with the world—taste its pleasures—attain its riches, and ascend to the summit of the happiness it affords. We are surrounded with its splendours—immersed in its amusements—intoxicated with its pleasures—engrossed in the ceaseless bustle of its vain pursuits, and captivated by the gay allurements of its fascinating scenes : Every hope is realized—every wish is gratified, and nothing seems to be wanting to perfect our felicity.

But earth can yield nothing which can render man really happy. Its wealth is too poor to enrich an immortal spirit—Its abundance is

too mean to meet and satisfy its vast desires. All is unsuitable—all is vain and fleeting as a shadow! There is nothing substantial—nothing perfect—nothing abiding—nothing unchanging, in the brightest scenes of earth. The soaring spirit is not satisfied with this. It demands a suitable—solid—supreme—all-perfect—unchanging—everlasting portion, and never is, nor can be happy, until this precious boon be found.

Thus it was with Eleanor. She had been fortunate—but not happy. In the midst of her prosperity, she had drunk deeply of the bitter cup of sorrow. Instead of the beautiful paradise which her fancy had formed, she found the world but a waste howling wilderness. Instead of the glorious path extending before her, covered with flowers, rich in their fragrance, and matchless in their beauty—briers and thorns had everywhere sprung up around her, even amid the gay and lovely foliage.

She now returned to the home of her youth;—but not as she had left it. “She went out full—but she returned empty.” Then, she was in the very pride of her youth and beauty;—now, she was feeble and emaciated—her

best days were fled, and her loveliness had faded like a withering flower. Then, she had health, and peace, and happiness ;—now, she was, to all appearance, rapidly sinking into an early grave. Then, her heart beat joyfully, and her bosom bounded with the sweet emotions of joy, and the gay dreamings of hope ;—now, her spirit was wounded, and her heart was blighted, and cold, and desolate, and broken. Then, a world of high expectation opened to her view, which seemed in the distance, adorned with all that was lovely, brilliant, and gay ;—now, she was a willing wanderer from her splendid eastern palace, her blooming gardens, and her rich domains !—— But why pursue the affecting contrast farther ? Is it ~~not~~ enough that we find our once young and happy Eleanor, the sad object of our pity and our tears, without minutely tracing the ruin of her past bright visions of hope ?

The time of youth is, perhaps, the happiest portion of the life of man. And in after years, there is no period of his by-gone days remembered with so deep, and powerful, and peculiar an interest. In every vicissitude of time or circumstance ; in joy or sorrow—prosperity or adversity—in the city or the solitude—in the

shade or the sunshine—in the bloom or the blight—this softest, sweetest of reminiscences, is still cherished with unabated satisfaction.

Whether he sigh in sadness, or rejoice in happiness—pine in sickness, or exult in health—sink in poverty, or soar in prosperity, he still remembers—still sighs and weeps over the recollection of his early home—his father's kindness, and his mother's love.

And even in distant climes—in fairer scenes, and richer lands, he longs to revisit the humble cot—the sequestered valley—or the furze-covered hill, which his heart hallows as his natal spot;—to close his painful pilgrimage, near the place where his journey began—to rest his aching head, and to repose his weary bones, in some quiet lonely grave, covered by the heath, and sheltered by the willow.

Thus Eleanor longed for the calm retirement of the sweet little habitation, where, unburdened with care, untutored by affliction, unacquainted with sorrow, and inexperienced in the world, she had passed in happiness, the days of her youth; and which she now selected as her final resting-place on earth, and her refuge from a vain and deceitful world.

In this simple and peaceful seclusion, she ex-

pected to find repose and serenity of mind, and some portion at least of that happiness, which its rural shades had formerly yielded.

But here, she was again disappointed. Her circumstances now were sadly altered. The feelings of her heart had been also changed.

The mind generally invests nature with its present emotions. A happy heart spreads a bright halo around creation. The heavens smile—the earth rejoices—and all nature looks cheerful and gay. But when grief casts its sable shadows over the mind, the serene beauty of nature is beclouded with a sombre hue, and seems to weep with the heart overwhelmed with its sorrow.

Eleanor's spirit was too deeply wounded for aught on earth to heal. She found no response to the incessant breathings of her sorrow, in the most beautiful objects of creation.

But, perhaps, her own language will better describe her peculiar feelings, under her altered circumstances.

We shall, therefore, turn our attention to her, as she once more comes before us, amid the scenes of her early youth.

CHAPTER XXXII.

“ O, loved and lonely wood—as to a friend
To whom I have unbosomed many a thought
Weary and sad—what change in thee is wrought ! ”

ONE bright and beautiful day, a few weeks after her return to Green Vale, Eleanor was sitting with her sister in the garden bower.

The weather was mildly—delightfully warm. The fresh light breeze was perfumed with the scent of a thousand flowers. The clear blue ether of the sky above, was here and there beautifully chequered by the fantastic forms of numerous soft white clouds ;—whilst the gentle sounds of rustling leaves, together with the wild but sweet and varied melody of the birds, contributed not a little, to heighten the charming effect of the scene.

Nothing could be finer than the situation of the little rural retreat occupied by the sisters.

The bower stood upon the summit of a small

green knoll, the highest of a cluster that were scattered around it—and formed the extremity of a beautiful garden, enclosed in shrubbery, stretching in an easy, gradual ascent behind the house.

This yielded the arbour a high, commanding view. It overlooked a large extent of country finely variegated with a thousand different traits of rural beauty; both marked by many noble features of the bold, the beautiful, and the picturesque, and diversified by many rich varieties of fertile fields and verdant plains.

A lofty hill rose proudly, in the distant west; while another, loftier still, but not so distant, lay to the north, extending partly to the east, imparting an appearance of imposing grandeur to the whole surrounding landscape. Thick hawthorn hedge-rows—clumps of shady evergreens, and, here and there, some stately oaks, were scattered in pleasing profusion, throughout the beautiful domain;—whilst the pretty villa of Green Vale, lying in the bosom of the lofty hills, overhung with brilliant roses, surrounded with graceful poplars, and sparkling with the reflection of a thousand radiant sunbeams—looked like a glorious gem, in the green diadem of nature.

This fair scene, however, failed to impart much satisfaction to the heart of Eleanor.

The mild breath of the light summer breeze, had called to her usually pale check, a faint glow of rich but changing crimson—yet she looked ill, feeble and exhausted. Her form was fragile and drooping—her lip was thin and colourless—and her soft blue eye was dim and sunken. She reclined languidly on her sister, gazing listlessly on the gay and beautiful prospect before her ; whilst a deep degree of sadness, seemed to cast its obscuring shadows over her brow.

“ Ah ! my dear sister,” she at length said, in a deeply melancholy tone,—“ how vain a thing is life !—After years of long and painful absence, I hoped for some share of happiness in revisiting the place of our once happy home. But the aspect of the scenes of early youth, seems sadly changed ; and the emotions of my mind are more varied still, than even the vicissitudes of time itself. As years have glided down the rapid stream of time, the glow of spirit, and the spring of heart, on calling to recollection a thousand delightful associations of former days—have fled for ever !—Alas ! it is thus I feel.”

“Your feelings, dearest Eleanor,” replied her sister, with tenderness, “are perfectly natural. What heart could be so cold—so callous, as to view with indifference, or even without painful emotion, the hallowed scenes of childhood and youth?”

“None—surely, none,” repeated Eleanor, with deep feeling: “Oh! how thoughts of the past arise to my mind, and flit before my fancy’s eyes, in quick and sad succession! Not a solitary spot—not a single object—tree, or field, or flower, or hill, or valley—but arouses, at once, a thousand sad and slumbering recollections, awakening a whole host of long-forgotten feelings, smothered sympathies, and ruined hopes. Every thing around presents a vivid—a fresh memorial, of days that are past and gone—days of careless childhood, and of happy youth!—days of the heart’s warmest impulse—of the feelings’ best and purest play.”

“But, my dearest sister,” said Harriet, in the most soothing tones of her gentle voice, “these painful impressions will soon pass away, when the scenes once familiar shall become familiar again. Life is indeed a chequered scene—of mingled sorrow, and of mingled joy.

But if you think of your sorrows—contemplate your mercies ;—if you look to the shade—behold also the sunshine. If the sights and the sounds of your youthful home, at present excite only gloomy reflections, these sad thoughts will soon be forgotten, and you will yet gaze, with purest pleasure, on the bright world around you. Look, dear Eleanor”—she added, turning to her with a sweet cheerful smile, and pointing to the lovely landscape which was extended before them—“behold this glorious prospect ! What on earth can be more beautiful—more delightful ? Or what can be more calm, soft, and soothing, than this little rural shade ?”

“Alas ! Harriet”—was the pensive reply —“it is not because I have found the home of my youth, less sweet or beautiful than I anticipated, that I thus complain. Ah ! no ; every thing is still the same ;—the grassy lawn is still as green—the air as fresh—the scene as calm—the sky as clear—the landscape as lovely ;—the trees as full of foliage, and the flowers as rich and fragrant —al!—every thing is the same. Yet still, there is a sad shade of difference. A strange unlooked-for change has come over that bright image of HOME,

which in gloomy, distant scenes my heart kept hallowed as a sacred thing, and my imagination loved to linger on, as its last high, happy vision of blessed hope! I am now in that dwelling, still and sweet—but every thing seems stript of its loveliness—divested of its charms—and tinged with the dark hues of blighted hopes and faded joys. The lofty trees around me, seem to bend their umbrageous forms—only to cast dark shadows over my soul. The gentle breeze, sighing through the vale—only draws forth a responsive sigh from my burdened bosom. The light-winged warblers, that are now pouring forth their sweetest melody—only stir within me emotions of deepest sadness. It is I—alas! who am changed! It is I—who have borne the rude touch of time's vicissitudes! Ah! Harriet," she continued in a voice which trembled with emotion, "do you remember the time when we used to sit in this very arbour—our minds luxuriating in pure delight over the beautiful forms of our fancy's gay creation? How different are my thoughts and my feelings now! Then, my heart was fresh and ardent—now, it is cold and joyless. Then, my gladsome hopes brightened my whole being—now, they

are buried beneath the weight of their very fulfilment. Then, I was young—and memory, too, reminds me that I was called the beautiful, the gay, the happy—now, as in mockery of all that, I am the faded—the forlorn—the bereaved—and the sorrow-stricken! Oh! what chilling thoughts are these!”

Here Eleanor paused, and was strongly affected.

“Well, dearest Eleanor,” replied her sister, gently but firmly, “if they are sad thoughts—what then? Is it not fit that we should know our true condition? that we should see ourselves as we really are—poor, frail, afflicted creatures? one moment in health and happiness—the next sunk in sickness and in misery; to-day borne on the airy wings of buoyant prosperity—to-morrow plunged into the lowest depths of dark adversity? We are born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. We come into the world weeping, and we still weep on through every stage of life, till we at length breathe forth our last sigh in the agony of death. Shall we dream, then, ‘of stable pleasure on the tossing wave?’ of unchanging bliss—unchequered brightness, in this sad scene of darkness and of death? Shall we

ever find the land of promise, in the waste howling wilderness?—or the paradise of God, where the curse still reigns and triumphs? My dear sister,” she continued, after an impressive pause, “let these reflections humble our hearts—sanctify our souls—reconcile our minds to the wise and sovereign arrangements of Heaven—lead us to look for solace to a higher, holier source than any thing beneath the skies; and prepare us for that great, inevitable change which shall shortly place us beyond the reach of time, its sorrows, or its dark vicissitudes. And though you are changed, dear Eleanor—sadly changed, and though sorrow and affliction may have anticipated the silent ravages of time, yet let us ever remember that there has been a wise—a gracious—and a wonder-working hand, in all the events of your chequered life: ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ Let this command to silent subjection every tumultuous feeling of the heart. It is the Lord—let him do what seemeth good in his sight. He is too wise to err—too good to be unkind. All his paths are mercy and truth. The darkest of his dealings are working for our good. They embitter sin—wean the heart from a vain world—cle-

vate and refine holy affection—shew the value of the life which the gospel reveals—strengthen and mature all the lovely graces of the Spirit—conform us to the image of the First-born among many brethren—yea, they shall all work for us, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Oh!” she exclaimed, her whole soul kindling with holy fervour, “what transcendent hopes are ~~these~~! Here is a portion that shall never pass away; large as our wishes, and lasting as our souls—an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading in the heavens! Why, then, repine at the providence of God?

‘ Trials make the promise sweet ;
Trials give new life to prayer ;
Trials lay me at His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there.’ ”

Harriet repeated these sweet but simple lines, with much feeling. Her sister seemed affected.

“ Ah ! yes,” she replied, in a trembling tone, an expression of deep self-conviction passing over her expressive countenance ; “ I stand rebuked for my unholy complainings. Why, indeed, should I repine at the dealings of my

kind heavenly Father? The arrangements of his providence may be dark and mysterious, still, I know, that they are wise and gracious, and every way worthy of Him, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. Great is my ingratitude—but how unwearied is his kindness! How constant my rebellion—but how abundant are his mercies! What a display at once, of human perverseness, and of Divine forbearance! But, alas!” she said with a deep sigh, “the scenes of sorrow through which I have passed, have imparted to my mind a tinge of the deepest melancholy. I feel a tendency to sink in my sadness—to faint under his chastening hand—to mourn my trials in hopeless grief, as if they were beyond the reach of every remedy—to overlook, amid my manifold sorrows, the sweet minglings of heavenly mercy, with which my cares have been lightened, and my afflictions alleviated. I find, that my strength is weak—my faith feeble—my love cold—my experience small—and my attainment low. Only a feeble ray of the love of Christ, has as yet illumined my dark mind—only a small portion of the joy that is unspeakable, has as yet pervaded my disconsolate soul. Still, though my eyes are

dim, and my heart is cold, and my faith weak, and my love languid, I sometimes see, and often feel, a little of the excellency of those sweet, exalted, and glorious hopes. And then my soul forgets its sorrow, and feels its burden lightened, as I gaze on the glories of the Divine Redeemer, and rest my hope on his finished work. But alas!" mournfully added she, after a momentary pause, "so **vain** are my thoughts—so unstable my feelings—so fleeting my joys, I am quickly overwhelmed again, with the recollection of my earthly troubles; and in a few moments, all that seemed so **vastly** desirable—so unutterably precious, has faded and fled from my view. Such is a faithful transcript of my mind; ever hoping—ever fearing; ever resting—ever doubting; my restless thoughts ever on the wing—unfixed—beclouded—darkened—and illuminated, like the fitful changes of a wintry sky. Oh! for a strong faith—an unshaken confidence—a lively hope—and an ardent love. Oh! for higher attainments—more abundant consolations—a more enlarged measure of the Holy Spirit's sacred refreshing influence!"

"Eleanor, dearest Eleanor!" said her sister, with affectionate earnestness, "how consoling

the thought, that like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him : for he knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust. Yes—the Divine Redeemer knoweth our frame, for he formed it at first ; he assumed it into personal union with himself ; he had a large share of all its sinless wants and weaknesses ; and he knows from experience the heart of a sufferer, for he was himself the chief of sufferers. ‘ Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things that he suffered.’ True, indeed, he is now in heaven—but he is still the same ; all his perfections—all his mercies—all his compassions, are still the same ! His nature is immutable ; his covenant—his covenant love—his covenant faithfulness—his covenant promises—are all like himself, divine—like himself, unchangeable. He rests in his love :— ‘ The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed ; but my loving-kindness shall not depart ; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.’ Oh ! what a blessed hope is this ! Let our changing hearts, rest in confidence on this eternal rock. He knows our sorrows—our sighs are heard in heaven—our groaning

is not hid from him—our tears are in his bottle—our names are engraven on his breast-plate—written on his very heart. How can he then forget us? ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget;—yet will not I forget thee.’ Dearest Eleanor, cast away the sad encumbrances of your earthly cares, and come to this all-sufficient, and unchanging refuge. What is all the pain, sickness, sorrow, and affliction in the world, when weighed in the balance with the bright glories, the transcendent loveliness, the infinite excellence of Him, who is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely! What exalted privileges—what a bright throng of excellencies are here displayed, bestowed, and experienced. Reconciled to God—redeemed by Christ—enlightened, instructed, sanctified, consoled, and glorified by the Spirit. What joy like this! so vast—so unutterable, which swallows up in its sweet immensity, all the sorrows and afflictions, doubts and apprehensions, which may threaten to overwhelm us on the perilous deep!”

Eleanor did not immediately reply; but sat in a pensive posture, leaning her head on her

sister's shoulder. Harriet's kind and consoling words, however, did not appear to have produced corresponding effects upon her mind. She seemed to be absorbed in deep and moody meditation ;—a painful expression of troubled emotion appeared to gather on her countenance, and the tone of her voice, as she began to speak, betrayed the corroding melancholy which was preying on her mind.

“ Ah ! Harriet,” she said, with a long deep sigh, “ I am feeble—sad—afflicted. I struggle with the gathering tempest,—but it thickens and gathers still. When for a moment, oblivion of the past steals gently over me ; and when the Spirit pours his sweet consolations, in all their holy and sustaining influence, into my troubled heart ; and when the glad hopes of the glorious gospel rise and brighten on my view ; and when the precious promises shed their soft, celestial light into my wounded spirit ;—then indeed, the tempest is hushed—the wildly beating heart is tranquillized ; my sighs are silenced—my tears cease to flow—and my pensive soul is relieved of its sadness. But again the dark forms of past sorrows, of vanished joys, and of lost blessings, start up, in dark array, to my painful recollection ;

while host on host of gloomy images rise upon my view.—Oh ! my children !—my dear, dear children ! My precious ones !—had they but been spared—had only *one* been left ! My Emily !—my sweet angelic Emily ! hadst thou been left ! My little Louis, my boy—my loved, my lovely boy ! in whom my heart was so entirely centred ! hadst thou been spared, to cheer me in my sadness,—to smile when I might weep—to gild the evening of my life of woe, with thy solace and thy love ! But thou, too, art gone ! my last !—my loveliest !—my only tie to earth ! Oh ! he was so artless—so innocent—so sweet—so beautiful—so engaging ! all, in short, that a mother's fond heart could wish ! This—this was the heaviest stroke of all ! The darkness of my former days, were scenes of brightness when compared to this ! Oh ! had Mercy spared me this !” Here poor Eleanor pressed her hands upon her heart, in deep convulsive agony ; and Harriet was grieved to the very soul to see the look of hopeless anguish which her countenance assumed.

“ Oh ! do not, my dearest sister,” she said, in the tenderest accents, “ do not give way to language so bitter. The heavy trials with

which it has pleased our gracious Father thus to afflict you, ought only to teach you to write VANITY on the best and the dearest sublunary blessings ; and lead you to submit to the wise and sovereign disposals of Heaven, and cling more closely in heart to Him who is the hope, the comfort, and the refuge of the soul—its shield—its hiding-place—‘ a present help in the time of trouble.’ ”

“ Oh ! you cannot feel as I do,” interrupted Eleanor, in a sudden burst of anguish, “ otherwise you would not speak so calmly of comfort to a heart still bleeding under the loss of its last earthly blessing. Comfort ! would that I could experience its sweetness again ! But comfort has fled, and sorrow remains. Alas ! alas ! grief may be smothered, but it cannot be assuaged. Oh !” could I—she said with passionate mournfulness, “ could I but paint that time of bitter agony—that fatal illness—that dread dream of death, when at length his infant spirit winged its flight ;—that last sad scene, when my only solace was to cull one curl of his golden hair—to take one look—the last sad parting look, of the little pallid image—oh ! I see it still ;—never—never shall I forget it !—retaining even in death all its surpassing loveliness ;—and

then it was hid for ever from my weeping eyes—severed from my desolate heart—and plunged ———:” Here she clasped her hands, with a look of intensest anguish, speaking slowly, and with a strange terrific calmness: “Yes—that little fairy form, which was wont to bound before my eyes in life, in beauty, and in infant glee—plunged into the unfathomable depths of the dark-heaving ocean; with scarcely a curling eddy, or a passing ripple on the glassy surface of that scowling deep, to tell that it had received all that I held precious on earth! Harriet!—my sister! say, can you blame me that I feel thus deeply—thus intensely?”

A flood of tears choked her utterance. Harriet wept too. She wished to moderate the violence of her sister’s emotion; but she repressed the words which rose to her lips, till the strong tide of her impassioned anguish had passed away. She felt that it would be cruel to check the free flow of nature’s feelings. She therefore allowed her to weep some time without interruption, and when Eleanor appeared more composed, she then, in her sweetest, softest tones endeavoured to pour the balm of consolation into her wounded heart.

“ I do not blame you, dearest Eleanor,” she said, “ for the natural expression of the deep and powerful feelings of your heart. I only wish to sympathise with your affliction—to share in your sorrows—to mingle my sighs and tears with yours, and to lighten or alleviate the pressure of your woe. But, my dear sister,” she said, gently, “ is there not a danger of indulging and cherishing an excessive and a hopeless sorrow, alike dishonouring to God, and injurious to ourselves! Tears that flow incessantly are the indications of immoderate grief—the silent utterance of deep murmuring, and sinful repining. Form them into language, and what is their import?—‘ My Father has smitten me so severely, that my heart cannot forgive him.’ ‘ Since the Lord has taken so much, let him take all: He has left me nothing that is worth retaining.’ How different the language of one, much more heavily afflicted than even you have been. ‘ The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ It is indeed of ‘ the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed: He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.’ Why, then, should a living man

complain? My Eleanor!—my sister!” she continued, with increasing earnestness and feeling, “if you think of your children, mourn their loss, and deplore their departure—contemplate also their glory and felicity. Have you not every reason to believe that your precious little ones are now in heaven? Listen to the breathings of the compassionate Saviour, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And, listen again, dear Eleanor;—how sweet and beautiful are these simple unadorned lines—

Babes, hither caught from womb and breast,
 Claimed right to sing above the rest;
 Because they found the happy shore
 They never saw, nor sought before.

“Where, Eleanor,” she said softly, yet energetically—“where are your sweet children now? Not in the agonies of death—but amid the glories of heaven! Not now in the waste weary wilderness—but in the promised land,—high in glory—exalted in felicity! They are not now in the conflict—but shouting the victory—celebrating the triumph. They are not now on the dangerous deep—but safe in the

haven of eternal rest. They are not now in great tribulation—but they have come out of it—have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—‘therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple.’ They are in heaven—within the vail—before the throne, the heavenly mercy-seat—in the presence of God—amid the glories of the Lamb. They hunger no more, neither thirst any more: they sigh not—they weep not—they suffer not now. No clouds obscure their unutterable glory,—no storms disturb their sweet repose,—no tide of sorrow swells within their happy heart,—no wave of trouble rolls across their peaceful breast; no spot—no stain, can sully now, their pure celestial robes! Oh! how unlike they *are* to what they *were* on earth! And how unlike they are to their sad afflicted mother! She is sighing—while they are singing. She is weeping—while they are shouting. She is repining—while they are adoring. How would they blush, could blushing be in heaven—how would they grieve, if grief could enter heaven—to see their mother thus deploring their glory and felicity.”——

She stopped, awaiting in deep anxiety the

effect which her words might produce. But Eleanor made no reply. She had listened, however, with marked attention to her sister's animated language. Her look had gradually become more composed under its sweet and soothing influence, and there was now a down-cast gentleness in her eye, which betokened a heart now, to some extent, impressed with the duty of submission. Harriet, unwilling to interrupt the train of salutary reflection, which her remarks had apparently awakened in her sister's mind, did not attempt to renew the conversation. And the sisters, slowly, and in silence, retraced their steps homewards.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“ Sweet are the uses of adversity.”

DURING the course of the few short weeks that followed, Eleanor's health suffered a material change. She was evidently sinking fast beneath the subtle inroads of a long and gradually increasing illness, and even the genial air of her native clime failed to impart the slightest improvement to her declining constitution.

And although her illness was rapid in its progress, yet its alarming symptoms had stolen upon her almost imperceptibly.

She had lingered, indeed, to the very last, amid the sweet sylvan scenes of the sequestered Vale. But even when strolling with her sister over many a grove, or shade, or fairy dingle, or other favourite haunt of former

happy days, inhaling the pure fresh breath of heaven—the feeling was deeply impressed on her mind, that her pilgrimage on earth was quickly drawing to a close.

Of this, indeed, from her conscious weakness, she was more fully convinced than any other. For while the eye of affection would fondly augur days of future health, from the bright expression of her eye, and the beautiful flush that would sometimes mantle her sweet pale face—she alone was conscious of the fierce fever which burned in her veins, daily sapping her feeble frame, consuming her lingering strength, and hastening the final issue of the life, which was fast sinking beneath the powerful influence of sorrow and disease.

She was soon, however, obliged to forego even her shortest walks. And now, indeed, it became but too painfully apparent that her illness was making alarming progress. The greatest apprehensions were excited in the mind of her anxious friends, and eminent medical advice was instantly called. But, alas! they received but little satisfaction from the opinion concerning her condition. Her disease was pronounced to be deep consumption, and although she might possibly linger for a time,

yet the fatal issue might be expected at no distant period.

She was now entirely confined to the house, and mostly to her own apartment, which she was seldom able to leave, till towards the latter part of the day, when she came down to the parlour, and lay on the sofa, for an hour or two, propped up with pillows.

The sweet little parlour was her favourite resort. It had been the scene of many happy days ;—it recalled to her mind many early recollections ;—it was endeared to her heart by many tender associations ;—and it was now, above all, hallowed to her soul by the holy and heavenly converse of her affectionate sister.

It was a relief to her mind to retire for a little from the chamber of sickness, and she felt it a source of sacred delight, reclining in her weakness on the parlour sofa, to talk with her beloved Harriet, now dearer to her than ever, on many a precious theme of Gospel hope ; till often the dark glimmer of the evening twilight would deepen around them, and surprise them in the midst of their earnest and absorbing conversation.

It was on one of these occasions that we now behold Eleanor. The sofa upon which

she was extended, half-sitting—half-reclining, was placed near the window, for the purpose, it would seem, of yielding her a glimpse of the green and fragrant earth—the garden, blooming in its mid-summer splendour—and the pure blue skies, smiling in their tranquil loveliness. .

A great change had passed over her appearance. Her countenance was wasted almost to a shadow. The soft hectic flush still lingered on her faded features, imparting a look of ethereal beauty and ineffable delicacy ; —but the lip and brow were very pale, while her sweet blue eyes, though glittering with more than their wonted brightness, were sunk and languishing.

There was a deep tinge of her usual sadness still resting on her countenance ; but it was a shaded—softened—tender melancholy, which seemed to indicate that a sweeter spirit of holy resignation was reigning within.

And, in truth, it was so. A remarkable change had passed over her mind. Her gloom, despondency, and sorrow had gradually subsided. She now ceased to repine—She ceased to mourn—She even appeared cheerful and happy. She could speak of her children

with composure, and even expressed a holy satisfaction that they were gone before her, and were safely landed on the shores of bliss; thus dissolving her strongest ties to earth, and rolling a load of anxiety from her dying hour.

She was fully aware of her dangerous condition; and as her illness evidently drew near its termination, she calmly looked forward to her approaching dissolution, and even surveyed it with joy and triumph.

The gloom and terror which appeared to envelop the dark valley of the shadow of death, when seen from afar, seemed gradually to vanish on a nearer approach;—and she delighted to talk on all that was past—on all that was to come—on all she had suffered, and on all she yet expected.

“My dearest Harriet,” she this evening said to her sister, who was seated beside her, in the attitude of deep, anxious, and sorrowful attention, “I have been greatly perplexed about the dealings of Providence. When I look back on my past life, I can see nothing but a continued series of affliction—one unbroken chain of wretchedness; and now, when I look forward, I see the sad end of the whole, in the silence and oblivion of an early grave.

I have felt a difficulty in bringing my mind to a calm conclusion—to a silent, adoring acquiescence in the arrangements and appointments of Heaven. But I now see that the Lord is omnipotent—that he holds in his hand the sovereignty of the universe—wields the sceptre of universal dominion—doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand from working, or say unto him, ‘ what doest thou ? ’ I now see that the Judge of all the earth will do right, and that all his appointments, painful though they be, are in mercy, faithfulness, and love. These reflections,” she continued, with soft and beautiful meekness, “ repress my rebellious thoughts—bring them into sweet subjection to his heavenly will, and hush to silence, my unholy murmurs, and sinful complaints.”

“ You are right, dearest Eleanor,” replied her sister, with deep earnestness, “ God cannot err in any of his appointments. All is admirable—adorable—divine ! Even the seraphim, these bright and glorious beings before the throne on high—cover their faces with their wings, whilst they contemplate his wonders, and adore his thrice holy name. He

sits in the heavens, high in counsel, above the loftiest range of finite understanding—of the mightiest grasp of created intellect—secure, and steadfast, and immutable in his wisdom, goodness, and undisturbed felicity. Amid the mighty revolutions that agitate,—convulse, or shock a groaning world, he sits unseen behind the ever-changing scene, conducting the mighty whole, with infinite wisdom, and unerring skill ;—adjusting and directing the complicated machinery of the ‘great universe ;—disposing and overruling his darkest dispensations, for our ultimate good—consoling the mind in its deepest trials—sustaining the heart in its saddest bereavements—enlightening the darkest shadows of life, and upholding the strength of the feeblest of his children. All our afflictions are blessings in disguise, which the light and glory of a brighter world will divest of their dark and mysterious garb.”

Eleanor seemed greatly moved.

“Yes, dear Harriet,” she said in that tone of voice so peculiarly soft and sweet, which now characterized her language ; “these are precious thoughts !—and how marvellously do they shed their benign, tranquillizing influence over my troubled mind : cooling—reviving,

and consoling my heart, as the rain that refreshes the dry parched earth. What a holy calm ! what abundant consolation ! what inexpressible joy do I now experience ! And what a contrast is this to all that the world can yield ! I loved the world—and I suffered severely for it. I trusted to the world—and it deceived me. Alas ! I leaned upon a broken reed—a sharp spear. See, Harriet, what the world has done ! Behold me, feeble—emaciated—dying—See what a wreck the world has left me !” She paused, visibly affected. Tears suffused her eyes, and a deep sigh burst from her bosom. But the next moment her agitation had ceased—a sweet smile passed over her pensive countenance, like a bright beam of sunshine amid surrounding gloom ; and her voice was calm and clear, as she continued :—

“ Well—*so let it be*—I shall not repine—I shall not complain—I shall not even breathe a wish that it had been otherwise. The evils of my heart were strong and deeply rooted, and much painful discipline was needful to subdue them. The rod has been administered—and all is well. If the Father of mercies hath caused me to sigh—it was *well* that I should sigh ; if He caused me to weep—it was well that I

should weep. He hath done all things well ! He has mingled with his love my bitter cup of sorrow. There has been kindness in his heart—mercy in his purpose—goodness in his chastisement, and now there is glory in the issue of all ;—all is well. It was love that gave the cup—mingled the ingredients—measured the proportion—put it to my lips, and, in kindness, made me drink it.”—Again she paused, much affected, but immediately continued : “ Yes ; I am weak—very feeble ; but Divine strength is glorified by its union with human weakness. Our gracious God will not suffer his saints to be tempted above what they are able to bear. As their day is—their strength shall be. He stays his rough wind in the day of his east wind—he makes his grace sufficient for them—he perfects his strength in their weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. True, I am dying—my heart and my flesh faint and fail—my greatest conflict is yet before me—and it is very near—approaching very rapidly ; yet I am not afraid to die. He will give courage for the dying hour—strength for the dying struggle ;—yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of

death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me : thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me."

Amid all the deep sorrow of Harriet's heart, on the near prospect of her sister's great approaching change, what an unspeakable solace was thus imparted to her mind, on listening to such sentiments as these !

She would willingly have continued the interesting conversation, but perceiving the languid and exhausted manner in which her sister spoke, she gently declined all further discourse, till she should enjoy a little repose.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“Is death at distance? No; he has been on thee;
And given sure earnest of his final blow.”

“Sweet peace, and heavenly hope, and humble joy,
Divinely beam on his exalted soul;
Destruction gild, and crown him for the skies,
With incommunicable lustre bright.”

THERE are some events in man's brief pilgrimage on earth, peculiarly important and impressive. But there is no part of his eventful history, so deeply, so sadly affecting, as the last closing scene. Oh! death—death, what indeed is so solemn—so awful—so momentous as this? How vain and worthless is the world, and all its attractions, at this dread

hour! Its gold, its silver, and its richest gems, are then as nothing. The gorgeous garment—the princely palace—the royal diadem, are then as nothing. The noble form—the cheek of beauty, and the eye of light—all, are then as nothing. They have been weighed in the balance, and found wanting. Then, the lofty spirit of the proudest, is humbled to the dust,—the boasted strength of the mightiest, is laid low as the grave,—the fascinating charms of the loveliest, disappear,—and the sparkling wit of the finest mind, is silenced for ever. Then, all meet without difference or distinction; the young—the old—the wealthy and the poor;—the mighty and the mean—the haughty and the humble!

Oh! the hour of death! how awful! how affecting!—and yet how frequently is this dark picture of woe presented to our view.

How often, in our own experience, are we called to stand by the bedside of some lovely or beloved one, in the last dread conflict with the king of terrors;—to watch his sudden, or his slow advance—the heaving of the burdened breast, and every movement of the languid eye! How often are we called to watch, even in the dreary midnight hours, which wrap the

unconscious world in deep repose—to watch with the ever wakeful eye of love, the short, the troubled, and consuming slumbers of approaching death ;—to smooth the restless pillow—to sooth the sad complaint—to cool the burning brow—to wet the parched and thirsty lip—to wipe the dewy damps of death from the pale faded features ;—to see, in helpless sorrow, expiring mortal energies, involved in fearful, final conflict with the last foe of man—to close the eyes when the spirit has departed—to consign the lifeless body to the silence of the tomb, •

And weep by turns at many a grave
Before we reach our own !

Oh ! there is something^h here, arousing thoughts of bitterest woe, feelings of acutest pain, and emotions of deepest anguish, almost overwhelming to the heart of the sorrowful beholder.

Alas ! these sad and painful duties now devolved on Harriet. Eleanor—poor Eleanor, was at length extended on her dying bed. Her illness was approaching its termination, rapidly and fearfully. The thread by which

she clung to life, was becoming daily more attenuated. Darker and darker every hour grew the “dreadful post of observation.”

Yet that gloomy scene had its minglings of brightness. Holy angels lingered around it, and the Lord of angels blessed it with his presence, and illumed it with his glory. Beauty—sublimity—solemnity, were blended together. There was a radiance in the darkness—a beam of light within the cloud—a majesty amid the mystic gloom! shedding a soft halo around the dying bed, sustaining the mind, calming the tumult of the soul, imparting a holy resignation to the will of God, amid the agonies of earthly woes, and the dissolving of the tenderest earthly ties.

Supported by pillows,—pale—breathless, and exhausted, the dying Eleanor lay in her chamber. Her countenance exhibited all the signs of speedy dissolution. But although languid and emaciated, as well as marked by the fixed and solemn aspect, which betokens a perfect consciousness of approaching death, her pallid features wore a look of beautiful calmness, sweetness, and contentment. Her eye, at all times soft and fine, was now full of a melting tenderness—an ethereal mildness—

a spiritual meaning, which imparted an inexpressible character of celestial loveliness to her faded dying appearance.

She had just awakened from a troubled slumber:—but even her few moments of broken repose had refreshed her; and though she was able to speak but little, and that only at intervals, and with great feebleness, the constant breathing of her soul, and the utterance of her heart, were expressive of her full—firm—unshaken reliance upon her Saviour.

“Yes—I am dying,” she murmured, “I know it—I feel it. I am going the way of all the earth:—Death at last has laid his icy fingers on my breast. I shall soon be laid in the silent tomb—the clouds of the valley shall soon cover me—the grass shall soon wave, green and fresh, above my grave.—But His holy will be done. It is kindest—wisest—best.”—

Deep emotion shook the frame of Harriet. For a few moments, she could not reply. But though her pale, sorrowful features displayed the bitter anguish of her heart, there was perfect submission of soul in the utterance of her feelings.

“My Eleanor!—my dear sister,” she said,

in a trembling voice ; “ alas ! you are indeed going to leave me. But, blessed be His name, you have hope in your death.”

“ Oh ! yes,” was the reply, “ I have hope—sweet—sweet hope. Oh ! how unutterably precious is this hope!—how valuable are the blessings of the Gospel in a dying moment ! They are so manifold—so rich—so free—so suitable—so satisfying—like cold water to a thirsty soul, or wine to cheer the heavy heart ! I am now ready to be offered—the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight—I have finished my course—I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.”

“ These, indeed, are precious hopes, my dearest Eleanor,” replied her sister, much affected. “ But will you say, my dearest sister,—are you able to express your thoughts of the Divine Redeemer ? What do you now experience of his presence and support ? ”

“ Much—much—but I am so weak—my disease is so powerful—the summons of death is so urgent—so imperious!—haste !—haste ! that I have little time to think ; yet, in the multitude of my thoughts within me, His com-

forts delight my soul. Yes, I am going to leave you, my dear—my precious sister. I am dying—fast dying—oh! it is a solemn thing to die! I see death approaching—hastening—flying—with all its vast solemnities—with all its agonies—its final struggles. I feel its first dread throes,—its cold—its cruel grasp. I see the dark and loathsome grave—the gloomy, narrow cell—all that is sad and humbling, in the dark mysterious dominions of the tomb. Yet, I am not afraid to die—Oh! no; I am not afraid to die.”

She stopped, quite exhausted;—her eyes closed, and for a few moments she seemed as if sunk into a gentle slumber. Still—solemn—silent was the scene. Harriet spoke not,—but she gazed with deep, ardent, yet sorrowful tenderness on the dying sufferer.

In a short time, however, Eleanor opened her eyes; her strength seemed to have wonderfully revived. She turned to her sister, with a look of striking earnestness and intelligence, uttering these expressions:

“I have taken a rapid glance of my past life—and, oh! I have been deeply—deeply sinful. ‘Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?’ I know that sin is the sting of death; that the

law is the strength of sin, investing it with all its terrible and destructive power; that the great Judge and Lawgiver is a being of infinite righteousness, and essential purity; and that I—I who have been so sinful, am just about to appear in the presence of his boundless holiness. Oh! how solemn all! Yet I am not afraid to die. I know whom I have believed—I know that my Redeemer liveth—I know that he is the First, the Last, and the living One;—that Jesus died—that he passed through the gloomy vale before me! Yes—yes—death seized—exerted all its strength—expended its power—exhausted its fury on the head of the ever-adorable Redeemer. Thus he knew what it was to die—and he still knows what support a dying pilgrim needs. He will never leave me in the conflict alone—never—oh! never.”

Again she paused; but not now apparently through weakness. Instead of being exhausted by so much speaking, she seemed to have gathered fresh strength. Her eye beamed with renewed brightness—her countenance shone with holy animation, as she continued:

“But this is not all. I have higher grounds for consolation still. Though I contemplate

the terrors of the tomb, I am not left to say, in hopeless despair, that it is a land from whose sad bourn no traveller ere returned. Yes, there was one—one traveller who returned—who brought life and immortality to light by his return. Though Jesus died—he rose again; he came back from the dead—he rose—he lives—he lives for ever—he holds the keys of hell and of death—he is the Lord of the living and the dead! He is able to save to the uttermost. He rose,—the First-born,—the faithful Witness,—the Prince of the kings of the earth,—the head of his body, the church—the forerunner—the captain of salvation—the first-fruits of them that sleep :—Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead. Oh! the riches of divine grace—the plentitude of divine mercy—the sweetness of the promises, sealed by Jesus' blood—the perfection, glory, and value of his finished work—the value of the hope which the gospel reveals—the power of the Spirit, that dwells in the bodies of the saints; that guides them through death, and leads them to glory!—Such, Harriet,” she said with a smile of ineffable sweetness, “such is my dying testi-

mony to the worth and glory of my gracious Redeemer. Such is the ground of my confidence, when my heart and flesh faint and fail, and when nothing in the created universe can afford one transient gleam of satisfied delight. Such is the Rock upon which I rest my eternal ALL,—and now, Lord,” raising her eyes to heaven, “lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. Oh! thou God of heaven, that broughtest from the dead the Lord Jêsus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, be with me in my dying moments,—and receive me into the mansions of glory in thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my God.”——

These were the last words which at that time Eleanor uttered, in a connected or coherent manner. Shortly after, she fell into that kind of heavy stupor, which frequently precedes the agonies of dissolution; and this continued, with alternate moments of consciousness, when aroused perhaps by some feeling of acute pain, almost for the whole remainder of the day.

CHAPTER XXXV.

“ Ah ! Sir, the good die first ;
But they whose hearts are dry as summer’s dust
Burn to the socket.” ————— *Wordsworth.*

It was an evening in the end of autumn, and the gathering shades of night hovered over the deserted harvest fields. Thick, threatening clouds floated upon the fading sky. A hollow wind was moaning amongst the sere and yellow leaves, and there was nothing stirring all around the sequestered habitation of the sisters, to disturb the gloomy stillness of the scene.

That habitation was now the house of mourning. Darkness, silence, and sadness brooded over it. The heavens were shrouded

in the symbols of woe, and the earth seemed to bewail the sweet flowers that were gone ; rendering the scene within, sadder and gloomier still, than even the frowning darkness of the scene without.

Thus and then it was, that Harriet and Miss Melville kept the last watch, by the bedside of their beloved Eleanor. Alas ! the autumn leaves, and the cloudy sky, were but too fitting emblems of her dying condition.

A painful sense of loneliness, together with that deep, undefined feeling of dread, which usually accompanies the presence, or the approach of death, had gradually stolen over the minds of the two mourners, spreading a depressing—chilling influence over their thoughts.

Harriet watched the coming of the last struggle with indescribable emotion. In her intense anxiety, and ardent affection, she completely disregarded her excessive bodily fatigue. Her grief was so great, so deep, so pungent, yet so silent and resigned, that it evinced the bitterness of her distress, while it also touchingly displayed her entire submission to the will of her heavenly Father.

In this dark season of affliction, indeed, her

mind was both sustained and tranquillized, by the joy and peace which Eleanor seemed to have experienced in her dying moments.

Harriet's task had often been to instruct and comfort Eleanor. But now the scene was changed, and Eleanor had become the comforter of her sister. And for this she was fully prepared. She had learned what Harriet had still to learn,—she had now reached a measure of high attainment, such as belongs only to a dying bed.

Oh! what an impressive teacher is death! He excites an attention—produces an interest—commands an impression, which the eloquence of an angel would fail to effect.

Eleanor, after the last conversation with her sister, which occurred in the earlier part of the day, was completely exhausted. She had immediately fallen into a profound sleep, or rather insensibility, which had continued with momentary revivals until the evening.

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Her head was reclining on the pillow—her eyes were closed, and the traces of death were but too plainly marked upon her features. She seemed to be in a sweet calm sleep. But

although she breathed with almost imperceptible softness, a strange—death-like paleness was fast overspreading her beautifully composed and placid countenance. A thick dewy moisture stood upon her pale marble brow—a half-formed smile still lingered on her wasted lip.

Oh! what a moment of dread suspense! What a profound and solemn stillness awaited the approach of the last enemy! The faint interrupted breathing of the dying sufferer, could be distinctly heard. The quiet whispering of the moments, in their rapid flight, could be almost numbered. Oh! how quickly—quickly they flew—haply the next, might prove the last!

Alas! the dreadful work of death was still advancing. The paleness of Eleanor's countenance assumed its ghastliest—deadliest hue. The moisture stood on her forehead—distilled in large and glistening drops—and all the tokens of rapid dissolution, gathered faster and thicker over her.

Oh! death—death, how terrible!—how appalling art thou!

Harriet and Miss Melville had remained in the situation we have described, almost with-

out speaking or moving, ever since that heavy deep sleep had commenced ;—and during this dreadful period of painful suspense, various and conflicting were the thoughts which passed through their minds, and the emotions which wrung their hearts.

Harriet, at length, in uncontrollable alarm, took hold of the hand of her now unconscious sister !—with such unutterable tenderness ! as if she were afraid, that her soft and gentle touch would break 'asunder the frail thread, which still sustained the life so dear to her. But, with a sudden start, she dropped it ;—it was cold—cold and clammy, as if already that of a corpse—and a shiver ran through her veins, as if its icy feeling had reached her inmost soul.

Yet Eleanor was not gone. The gentle touch awoke her. She sighed—then smiled, as if awakened from some pleasant dream—uttered some broken accents—opened her eyes, and gazed around her with a look of perfect consciousness.

Harriet instantly rose, and bent over her, in deep anxiety. She clasped her hand—she kissed her brow—lip—cheek, with passionate fervour.

“My sister!—my love!—my Eleanor!” she murmured in the tenderest tones.

Eleanor now whispered something with peculiar earnestness. It was a request that her sister would pray. Harriet prayed. And, Oh! how her inmost soul was poured forth to God, in that fervent, yet agitated prayer. It flowed from the mingled emotions of deep sorrow, ardent affection, holy gratitude, and heavenly joy. It breathed with a spirit of the deepest devotion, and glowed with the accents of the sweetest hope.

The sinking spirit of the dying Eleanor was refreshed, consoled, and strengthened by the holy exercise. Her countenance assumed an ineffable expression of heavenly sweetness, during the few moments of communion with the Father of mercies. And she was thus enabled to express anew, the unshrinking confidence of her soul in the divine Redeemer, and in his finished work, as the only ground of hope in her expiring moments. Her dying breath was expended in fervent and devout supplications—in sweet expressions of heavenly joy, adoring gratitude, and holy triumph.

But the tide of life ebbed quickly. Her strength sunk rapidly—her lip quivered—her

tongue faltered—her eyes grew dim—her bosom heaved—her breathing came in faster—thicker gushes. Yet she still essayed to speak. Her words were few—faint—hurried ; but fixed—coherent—quite intelligible.

“Death—death—can this be death? Oh! if it is so—if my hour is indeed come—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. This was thine own prayer—Blessed Jesus, it is mine. If this be death—amen—even so—Come, Lord Jesus,—come quickly. I have waited for thy salvation, oh! God—my God!” Here she struggled and gasped as if for breath ;—her trembling sister gently supported her head. For a moment she seemed relieved—she raised her dying eyes to heaven, exclaiming, in a faint, though audible voice,—

“Jesus! my Lord!—I know thy name!—thy name is all my trust! Oh! thou blessed Saviour! what glories centre in thy cross!—what beams of heavenly bliss now burst upon my view!—what streams of living water are pouring from the throne of God and of the Lamb—filling—filling my peaceful soul. Oh! death, where is thy sting?—oh! grave, where is thy victory? Thanks—thanks be to God,

who giveth me the victory, through the Lord — Jesus — Christ.”——

At this moment her eye gained an expression of strong intelligence, and beamed with a look of the purest satisfaction and delight. She looked at Harriet—then at Miss Melville—then at Harriet again. She smiled sweetly—her lips moved—she seemed to breathe a fervent prayer, or a final adieu ; but the dying accents were scarcely audible—the faint murmur trembled on her lip :—“ Joy—joy—where joy is ——,” was all that was heard of the low whisper.

Harriet bent closer to listen.—Her cheek touched hers—her arm encircled her neck—she felt the dissolving breath of life become fainter and fainter, vibrating like the expiring cadences of the wild aerial lyre, when softly touched by the breathings of the gentle breeze ; —now coming—now going—and now again fluttering in its last mortal throes. Then, there was the last convulsive thrill—a sudden glance—a low passing sigh—and all was over. The spirit had winged its mysterious flight,—and Eleanor was no more.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“ 'Twas she—the poor man's friend,
 Who trod the paths of usefulness,
 Diffusing happiness.” —————

THE history of the sisters draws quickly to a close. What more can we say of Eleanor, save that she returned to her kindred dust, and was deeply lamented by surviving relatives and friends—that many mourners swelled her funeral train—and that a sculptured monument now marks the place of her last lowly dwelling.

She appeared for a little, and then she fled. She stood out to our view like a sparkling star—but she vanished in a moment like a meteor of the sky. She has gone—she has passed away, like a tale that has been told—like the fleeting shadow of a summer cloud—

like a morning dream, or a midnight vision. The airy phantom is fled—the dream of life is past—and the bright enchantment is dissolved for ever. She is cut down as a flower, and is withered. The green grass covers her early grave, and deep oblivion is spreading its dark veil over her, save in one fond heart, where her name is embalmed, and her memory cherished, with an undiminished and undying interest.

Still, though Harriet's grief was deep and lasting, its bitterness was alleviated by many sweetly consoling considerations. She had seen her sister's peaceful departure. She was fully persuaded of her glory and felicity, in the realms of bliss ; and though death had dissolved the tender earthly tie which had bound them together, it could not dissolve the holy union which exists between the souls of the redeemed on earth and the blessed in heaven. Though she had consigned the dust of her beloved and only sister to the lonely grave—to mingle with the dust of a thousand generations ; yet that dust was sacred and precious, and the object of the knowledge and the care of Him whose understanding is infinite—who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in work-

ing : That dust, even in the dark and melancholy tomb, remains in marvellous and mysterious union with the glorified body of Jesus on the throne—and that dust is yet to be raised, and fashioned in glorious conformity to the bright and blessed image of the First-born among many brethren.

The lapse of time, too, spread its healing balm over the wound, which the death of Eleanor had inflicted on her warm, susceptible heart ; soothing her sorrow—softening the acuteness of her grief, and elevating her soul, by the sad but salutary trial, to higher attainments in holiness of life, and Christian experience.

The Lady of the Vale, as Harriet was now denominated, soon became pre-eminently distinguished by her deep, unobtrusive, and enlightened piety.

Her character was an amiable representation of the true Christian ;—a lovely exhibition of the excellency—the sanctity—the beauty, and the blessedness of the religion of Jesus ; —a bright transcript of the holy character, and devoted life of her Lord and Master. With the most exalted views of the adorable riches of Divine grace, she united a spirit of

the purest devotion, and a life of the highest holiness, and most unwearied goodness. With the mild gravity of demeanour which befitted her high profession, she mingled a grace—a dignity—an affability—and an intelligence peculiarly her own ; qualities which failed not to procure the high regard and deep respect of all around her.

Her diffusive benevolence formed one of the most beautiful traits of her amiable character.

She was now the sole proprietor of all her sister's wealth—that wealth which had been obtained by the sad cost of the health, happiness, and life itself of one so truly dear to her. Harriet did not forget—she never could forget, the bitter price—the costly sacrifice. But she remembered also the important trust committed to her care, in the mysterious providence of heaven, and the high responsibility connected with the charge. She did not, therefore, hide her granted talents in the earth, but, imitating the bright example of her Divine Master, she went about continually doing good. She listened to the complaints of the poor and needy. She soothed the sorrows of the afflicted and the mournful. She supplied the wants of the aged and the indigent. She sat by the bed-

side of the sick and the dying ; seeking to impart to all the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus—the sweet experience of his precious promises—the abundant consolations of the glorious gospel, which she believed and cherished, and enjoyed so fully herself. Her schemes of benevolence were varied and numerous ; of which, were it not to exhaust the reader's patience, we might take a rapid glance.

Behind the richly wooded hill, which takes its gradual rise frõm the sweet sequestered Vale where she still resides, is situated, at a short distance, the little village of that rural district ; with its venerable church—its pretty white-washed dwellings—their latticed windows, with the fragrant honeysuckle climbing over them ; and their little spots of garden-ground, filled with useful vegetables, or adorned with a rich variety of sweet and lovely flowers.

The neatness and the comfort of this pretty little village, are chiefly owing to the influence and beneficence of the Lady of the Vale.

At a short distance from the village, on the foreground of a gently rising eminence, stands a large building of recent erection—of chaste and elegant Gothic architecture. The site is

well chosen, and the grounds are well arranged. A finely gravelled plain extends before the door, while a simple railing, with a wicket gate, surrounds the whole. A group of tall plane trees are clustered close behind, bending their stately forms and their spreading branches over the low roof, in the plenitude of protecting power, amid the angry storms of winter—or affording a cooling shade, amid the glaring splendour of the summer sun.

An elegant taste appears in the whole of the design ; but utility is its grand characteristic. This is, in fact, the village female school-house, lately erected, and still supported by the Lady of the Vale.

But she did not confine her exertions to her own vicinity. She took a lively interest in the universal diffusion of the glorious gospel—in the enlargement of the kingdom and glory of the divine Redeemer.

From the affecting family associations connected with India, she felt a peculiar obligation to aid in extending the gospel in that far distant clime. She engaged in the work with her whole heart and soul, making the prosperity of the blessed cause the subject of her unceasing supplication ; largely assisting, by her

riches and influence, the important object, and encouraging, to the utmost of her power, the pious exertions of those wonderful men, who had been the humble but honoured instruments, through the blessing of God, of planting the gospel in India—of translating the holy Scriptures into the languages of the East, and of spreading light and salvation through that benighted land.

Harriet's numerous calls of Christian duty frequently obliged her to visit the metropolis; but her residence, in general, was at Green Vale, which, though beautiful before, she had rendered still more beautiful, by a judicious enlargement of her gardens and grounds.

Yet she does not dwell in strict retirement. Besides her still constant companion, Miss Melville, now arrived at an almost venerable age, and much altered as to her character from the careless, scornful unbeliever of former days, Harriet's happy habitation is frequently enlivened by agreeable and refined society, especially that of the pious and enlightened. The young are also the objects of her tenderest care, and warmest interest. Many have been blessed by her pious friendship—her Christian

feeling—her high intelligence, and her enlarged beneficence ;—and many look back with the liveliest emotions of grateful recollection to that period of purest happiness—of mental improvement, and spiritual enjoyment, which was spent in the society of the Lady of the Vale.

FINIS.

